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ABSTRACT

This research report evaluates a 2-year effort to achieve home-school partnerships and success for all children at two urban schools: P.S. 111 in New York City and the Ellis School in Boston. As conceptualized by the Institute for Responsive Education staff, the process of achieving success for all children required the transformation of school organization and the development of a home-school-community partnership in order to accomplish that transformation. These changes involved the commitment of educators and parents to an explicitly defined mission; changes in curriculum and instructional practices; supportive leadership; and a norm of continuous improvement. Data were obtained through document review, surveys, observations, and interviews. Findings indicated that P.S. 111 and the Ellis School were very successful in initiating activities that reached out to parents and community members. However, the two pilot schools differed in developing the scaffolding that would lead to success for all children. Also included in the report are descriptions of site visits to schools in Maryland and California where successful models or promising practices leading to parent involvement or success for all children were implemented. Citations number 34. (RH)

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Schools Reaching Out and Success for All Children

Two Case Studies

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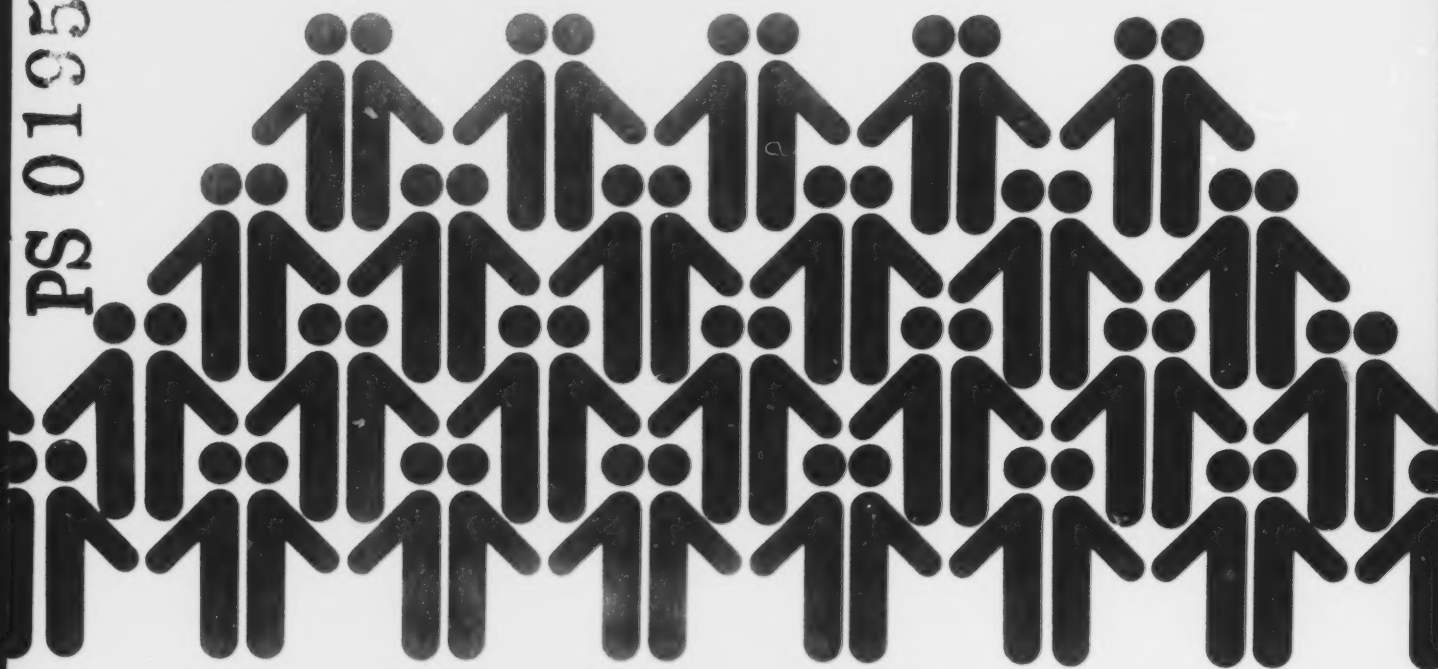
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SCHOOLS REACHING OUT AND SUCCESS FOR ALL CHILDREN:

Two Case Studies
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September, 1990

Schools Reaching Out is a project which attempts to demonstrate that urban public schools can fundamentally change their relationship with low-income parents and their communities, and in so doing, move closer to the goal of academic and social success for all children.

The project began in September 1988 as two schools -- the David A. Ellis School in Boston and P.S. 111, the Ochs School in New York City -- agreed to collaborate with the Institute for Responsive Education as "laboratory schools" trying out strategies to build new relationships with parents and the community.

Schools Reaching Out was designed to interweave research and practice. While the laboratory schools work, aided by IRE staff, to refine new strategies, a team of researchers is investigating questions of what works and why -- again, in collaboration with the schools' staff. This publication, and the series of which it is a part, is an effort to relate some of those learnings.

For more information on Schools Reaching Out or the series of publications, write to: Institute for Responsive Education, 605 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, MA 02215.

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PREFACE

Schools Reaching Out (SRO) is a project which attempts to demonstrate that urban public schools can fundamentally change their relationship with low-income parents and their communities, and in so doing, move closer to the goal of academic and social success for all children.

The project began in September 1988 as two schools -- the David A. Ellis School in Boston and P.S. 111, the Ochs School in New York City -- agreed to collaborate with the Institute for Responsive Education (IRE) as "laboratory schools" trying out strategies to build new relationships with parents and the community.

Schools Reaching Out was designed to interweave research and practice. While the laboratory schools worked, aided by IRE staff, to refine new strategies, a team of researchers investigated questions of what works and why.

The Schools Reaching Out project grew out of IRE's research on "hard to reach" parents. It's worthwhile to note that we since stopped using that term, since our research indicated it is at least as much a problem of "hard to reach" schools. Project Director Don Davies directed a research study that interviewed several hundred low-income parents and teachers and administrators in three very different cultural settings: Boston, Liverpool and several cities and towns in Portugal.

The results of this study were remarkably similar across all three cultures. What Davies found was a mutually reinforcing cycle of negative expectations: school people really didn't expect low-income parents to participate productively in their child's educational life and made few efforts to build positive relationships; poor parents, in turn, did not expect to be meaningful actors in their children's learning and often had nothing but negative experiences with the school.

With this research insight in hand, IRE staff asked themselves the question, "So now what do we do about it?"

The project that eventually became Schools Reaching Out is based on several fundamental assumptions. First, we believe that you can change people's attitudes by changing the structures in which they live and work. By changing the structure of urban schools in some small but significant ways, we hoped to build school communities that believed that:

- * family involvement is integral to the question of making progress toward the goal of success of all children
- * there is no such thing as a "hard to reach" parent.

Essentially, we hoped to help ordinary public schools move toward the belief embodied in the African proverb "It takes a whole village to educate a child."

These ideas became the basis for a project plan and a grant proposal that attracted funding from five private foundations: the Boston Globe Foundation, the Aaron Diamond Foundation, the J.M. Foundation, the Leon Lowenstein Foundation, and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. All were interested in a parent/ community involvement project that would "stand out among the trees" and take an honest, realistic look at what is actually possible in urban schools.

To begin, IRE asked both of our school partners, the David A. Ellis School and P.S. 111, to consider themselves "laboratory" schools to try out a number of family and community involvement strategies. We were, we explained, interested in demonstrating that family and community involvement was not just coming to meetings. Not all of the strategies we tried would work. That would be O.K., we said, as long as we were able to reflect on and learn from what we were doing.

Susan McAllister Swap's report Schools Reaching Out and Success for All Children: Two Case Studies is an insightful look at the work in these schools. Swap is one of Schools Reaching Out's seven-member research team and her primary questions are central to any evaluation of the project's efforts. In this report, she looks at the questions: What are the links between parent involvement, school community collaboration and children's academic and social success? How do these links begin and how are they maintained?

Drawing on a review of each school's experience with these issues, Swap takes a critical look at SRO, both with an eye toward better understanding the work of the 1988-89 and 1989-90 school years and toward helping IRE and other organizations improve their understanding of how to help schools.

Swap's report is honest and direct in its evaluation of what worked in these schools and what didn't. Most commendable about all this is the honesty and candor with which teachers, administrators, and parents of the Ellis School and P.S. 111 opened their doors to us. This was not a project that worked perfectly. SRO sought to interweave research and practice, and this blend is sometimes a volatile one. What carries all of us through such

projects is a commitment to honesty and reflection without which no one can learn. Our school partners' honesty and willingness to look hard at the way their school communities work will be absolutely essential ingredients if we are to make any progress towards making our schools work for all our children.

-- Owen Heleen
Vice President
Institute for Responsive Education

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research report evaluates progress towards home-school partnership and success for all children at P.S. 111 in New York City and the Ellis School in Boston from September 1988 through June 1990. The data upon which this report is based include document review, survey data, observations during repeated site visits, and interviews with key participants. The dual focus of this research effort was to document efforts to reach out to parents and community members, and to assess changes in practice and attitude in teachers, administrators, and parents that might lead to "success for all children." This report also includes a description of site visits to schools in Maryland and California where successful models or promising practices leading to parent involvement or success for all children were being implemented.

P.S. 111 and the Ellis School were very successful in initiating activities that reached out to parents and community members. At P.S. 111, for example, parent education and enrichment activities attracted hundreds of parents from diverse backgrounds. Parents were involved in supporting their children's learning through the Read-Aloud program carried out at home, as volunteers in the schools, and as participants in teachers' mini-grant programs that fostered curriculum enrichment. The Parent Center attracted a consistent group of parents who offered support for school activities and programs and became involved in advocacy and decision making through the School Community Planning Council. Community outreach brought many resources into the school (volunteers, small grants, enrichment activities) that enhanced children's experience and learning. Progress towards home-school partnership is explained within a developmental framework, and recommendations that would further enhance home-school communication and collaboration at P.S. 111 are included in this report.

At the Ellis school, the SRO program was particularly successful in reaching out to parents not ordinarily involved in the school. Activities that contributed to this effort included the home-based parent outreach program, counseling and advocacy services offered to parents through the Parent Center, and education and enrichment programs that were responsive to the diverse needs and interests of parents in the community. Home-school communication was improved by innovative programs such as school visiting week, parent breakfasts, and study seminars. The Raise a Reader program involved parents in reading to their children at home. Parents were involved in developing goals and action plans for the school as a whole during the first year of the project. However, including parents in school-wide decision making or as partners in working toward common school goals did not occur in the second year, largely because high rates of staff and administrator turnover impeded continuity of effort.

The two pilot schools had different experiences in developing the scaffolding that would lead to success for all children. As conceptualized by IRE staff, achieving success for all children represents a paradigm shift that requires the transformation of schools as they are currently organized and the necessity of home-school-community partnership to accomplish that transformation. Site visits to schools in which progress towards success for all children has been made suggest that critical ingredients in transforming a school include commitment of educators and parents to an explicitly defined mission; changes in organization, curriculum, and instructional practices; supportive leadership; and a norm of continuous improvement.

At P.S. 111, the School Community Planning Council initiated a change in school organization that brought educators, parents, and community members together to develop joint goals. School-wide implementation of the "language initiative" led to many changes in curricular and instructional practice and improvement in children's reading and writing skills. Coordination of the language initiative with parent support and community enrichment activities was particularly noteworthy. Continuing work is needed in clarifying the school mission, creating a norm of collegiality in the school, and integrating a systematic problem-solving or inquiry process into the Council's way of doing business. Ideally, the continuation of the parent involvement program will be assured by incorporating a subcommittee on parent involvement into the Council as a permanent structure.

At the Ellis, educators and parents agreed on four joint goals at the end of the first year: initiation of physical education and counseling programs and modification of curricular and instructional practices to support multicultural and whole language thrusts. With the dramatic turnover in staff that accompanied the second year of the project, school-wide efforts to achieve these goals did not occur. The Planning Council was not an effective structure for joint decision making at the Ellis, and continuity was lost in the effort to transform attitudes and practices of school personnel towards success for all children and home-school partnership. Individual teachers' efforts at promoting home-school collaboration in support of student achievement were noteworthy.

IRE's efforts to bring a transformational vision of success for all children to two "ordinary" urban schools within two years was an ambitious and important effort. Extraordinary progress was made in reaching out to the community in both schools. Educators' attitudes and practices have been substantially modified at P.S. 111, and many individual teachers at the Ellis have demonstrated a readiness for joint work. Many innovative and practical programs were initiated that could be replicated elsewhere. IRE's experience in both schools, combined with exploration of model programs in other sites, has led to a developmental model of parent

outreach and school reform and a clearer understanding of how to initiate reform in new settings. Although success for all children in these schools was not achieved, many children's lives were enriched by the project, and some gained new skills. The primary legacy of the project, however, is in the teachers, parents, and administrators who learned from each other and project staff, gained new skills and understanding, and feel empowered to continue the experiment in reform.

Dedication

This report is dedicated to the teachers, parents, and administrators of P.S. 111 and the Ellis School, who were gracious with their time, honest in sharing their views, courageous in experimenting with new ideas and practices, and dedicated to supporting children's learning and growth.

CHAPTER ONE: OVERVIEW

Achieving success for all children is the finale of a complex intervention process. A review of the literature on successful urban schools (summarized later in this report) reveals that the components of the intervention include:

1. A close partnership among home, school and community;
2. An attitude shift that embraces the goal of success for all children;
3. A commitment to an explicitly defined mission of success for all children from key participants;
4. Changes in practice to accomplish the mission, such as revised curriculum, new methods of instruction, elimination of tracking, and increased communication between home and school;
5. Training for participants in accomplishing the changes in practice;
6. Support for experimentation from central administration, school administration, and the community;
7. Transformation of the existing organization and activities of the school to support the mission;
8. Continuous evaluation of progress in achieving the mission and revision of practice to accomplish it.

In this report, I will document the progress made at the David A. Ellis School in Boston and at P.S. 111 (the Adolph S. Ochs School) in New York City in engaging in this change process. It is important to recognize from the outset that two years is too short a time to initiate, implement, and institutionalize change of this magnitude. This report will include sections on each of the eight areas described above at each school, presenting data from each site as well as my evaluation of successes achieved, barriers encountered, and lessons that may be learned from our experiences. Information gathered from visits to schools using other models to achieve success for all children will also be shared to highlight promising approaches and developmental steps in the transformation of a school.

Method

The Schools Reaching Out project was begun at P.S. 111 and at the Ellis in September 1988 and ended in June 1990. Researchers were added to the Schools Reaching Out (SRO) staff in the late spring of 1989 and had access to all documents that had been collected during the first year of the project (e.g., Commission reports, key teacher and facilitator reports, minutes of the

Executive Planning meetings). IRE faculty, staff, and graduate students working on the project (e.g., Davies, Heleen, Johnson, Page, Krasnow, Jackson, Orr) were always responsive and accessible when asked to answer questions or discuss puzzles.

Another source of information was survey data. These were collected by a doctoral student from Boston University (Sue Ellen Hurley Hogan) who conducted a telephone survey of Ellis parents during the first year regarding their involvement at the school, and by the Boston and New York teacher research teams who conducted surveys among their peers regarding their views of parents. Some teachers also gathered questionnaire data from children and parents about the effects of the mini-grant projects.

I collected additional data by visiting each site at repeated intervals where I interviewed key personnel, including principals, assistant principals, teachers from different grades and specialties, parents, family support team members, key teachers, site facilitators, and project directors. I also visited classes and observed special activities, such as meetings of the teacher research group at Ellis, workshops for teachers and parents, executive planning meetings, celebration luncheons, and parent meetings. At P.S. 111, I attended and then helped to facilitate meetings of the School and Community Planning Council. In addition, I was in frequent telephone contact with those IRE staff who were present more regularly in the schools and reviewed documents that described additional activities or events (e.g., newsletters, minutes of planning council meetings, school achievement data, key teacher monthly reports, handouts, announcements, and photographs prepared by project staff).

The strategy for completing my portion of the research effort, documenting success for all children, was to gather data on the process of change as it affected teachers, parents, and administrators. These were the groups that needed to be reached and to "reach out" during the first two years of the research effort, and these were the groups for whom resources, consultation, and training to support success for all children were designed. Our belief was that until teachers (as the primary implementors of innovation in schools) had had time to decide upon and implement changes in practice with children and parents, evaluation of student achievement was premature. Nonetheless, some anecdotal information is available on student growth, and test scores from national achievement tests taken by students in both schools will be reported.

The researchers were instructed to participate in on-site discussions and activities where appropriate and to share preliminary findings and impressions (based on literature reviews, site visits, process observations) with the project staff and school colleagues whenever it might be useful to move the project forward. Within the limits imposed by the need to respect the

confidentiality of interview material, the researchers did so. The researchers were also invited to share information that they collected with each other. The research team (Brooks, Goode, Krasnow, Johnson, Seeley, Sussman, Swap, and Zeldin) took advantage of many formal and informal meetings and telephone conversations to check the validity of data, keep abreast of current events, and test hypotheses that were generated. In some cases, members of the research team worked together to interview parents or school personnel. We were reassured to discover that our records and impressions from the same data sources were consistent.

In summary, this research effort was an attempt to monitor what happened and why, using as many data sources as possible, sampling participants repeatedly, with different data collection processes, and with different data collectors. Nonetheless, this report represents only a fraction of what occurred and what was learned, and highlights the answers to only some of the questions that have been answered during these two years in the field.

The methodology is akin to Sarah Lawrence Lightfoot's "portraiture," the word she used to describe her study of good high schools. By using observations, interviews, careful reviews of public and private documents, and "hanging out" inside the school and in the surrounding community, she hoped to:

....reveal holistic, complex descriptions of school culture....I wanted to document the schools' essential features, their generic character, the values that define their curricular goals, and their institutional structures; and I wanted to explore the connections between the style and personality of individual actors and the collective character of the school...As the term "portrait" suggests, I was seeking an analysis of schools that combined empirical and aesthetic dimensions (1986, p. 15).

The Context for Change

P.S. 111, The Adolph Ochs School. P. S. 111 is on West 53rd and Tenth Avenue in Manhattan. It is in the Clinton district, formerly known as Hell's Kitchen. The neighborhood is one of tall apartment and office buildings, small ethnic restaurants, wholesale food markets, Carnegie Hall, and off-Broadway theaters. This is an imposing school. As one walks to the entrance, one views a long expanse of school edifice and a blacktop playground securely protected by a strong, tall metal link fence. Inside the school, one is struck by the shiny floors, the brightness of the lighting, many displays of children's artwork and compositions, and wide, spacious corridors.

The school serves children in grades K-6. The School Profile published by the New York City Board of Education in Fall 1989, reports that as of October 31, 1988, there were 669 students, who were 67% Latino, 19% African-American, 11% white, and 3% Asian. Many of the families have limited income: 79.5% of the children were eligible for free or reduced price lunch. Twenty-four children were in temporary housing, but 76% of the children had been in the same school for two years; 70% for three years. There were 124 children with limited English proficiency. Many different nationalities are represented in the school. There is a stable Puerto Rican population that includes third generation residents of the neighborhood, as well as many recent immigrants from Central and South America and lesser numbers from such countries as Albania, Yugoslavia, and Vietnam. The majority of teachers are white (34 of 45 or 67%), 93% have been teaching for at least five years, and 61% of them have been teaching at P.S. 111 for five years or more.

My predominant impression of the psychological climate of the school is that most people feel vulnerable, and there is little trust. For many of the teachers, the fact that the principal and assistant principal are new, have different expectations from the previous administration, and monitor classroom practice closely breeds concern. The principal is being evaluated for tenure and has felt unsure of the support of district administration. Many teachers reported that there are cliques, and many eat lunch alone in their rooms. One teacher explained that "Each person has his own agenda and there have been years of things festering." Individuals worried about speaking their minds to me or sharing in group settings, though some did anyway. Most information seemed to be transmitted second or third-hand.

No systematic review exists of the history of parent involvement prior to the project. It is clear, however, that this school did not have an extensive parent or community involvement program. Communication with parents was minimal, with no tradition of regularly scheduled conferences, newsletters, volunteers, or planned program of activities for parents. A very small space (a closet, as I was told) was identified as a parent center prior to the initiation of the SRO project.

It was hard to reach out to others in this climate, and collaboration around common goals was not a pattern. Teachers preferred to set their own classroom agendas, and several mentioned that they found administrative requirements demeaning. Many of the seasoned teachers have seen innovations come and go, and as in most schools, there is justifiable suspicion of any administration's or outsider's long-term commitment to new projects. Despite the commitment to individualism, I heard repeatedly a deep need for acknowledgement and genuine appreciation from others. Yet cynicism made it difficult to risk being appreciative or to accept acknowledgement when given.

Despite these barriers, there was guarded optimism among teachers that conditions could improve. Many demonstrated a willingness to take advantage of resources to enrich their curriculum, and some participated actively in the change effort. There is a high level of professionalism in the school and a willingness to work hard on behalf of the children or an important cause. The principal and assistant principal are committed to improving children's achievement and increasing parent involvement. There was an explosion of activities generated during the two years of the project, which will be documented in Chapter Two.

The Ellis School. The David A. Ellis School is in the Roxbury section of Boston. It is located on a residential, tree-lined street a few blocks from Columbus Avenue, a major traffic artery, and not far from Franklin Park, a large city park that houses a newly refurbished zoo.

Data published by the Boston Public Schools Research and Development Office indicate a school enrollment of 482 as of June 1989. In this K-5 school, 53% of the children are African-American; 6% are white; 1% are Asian, and 40% are Hispanic. There was quite a bit of instability in the school population in 1988-89, with 113 new admissions to the Boston system, 69 transferring to Ellis from other schools in the Boston system, and 106 children transferring out of the Ellis to other Boston schools. The Ellis is eligible for Chapter 1 funds and has also been designated as an Opportunity School, since students from this school scored in the lowest quartile on the Massachusetts tests of basic skills.

Of the 31 professional staff, 11 are African-American; 14 are white; and 6 are Latino. Eighteen of the teachers (or 64%) had advanced degrees in 1988-89. Stability of the professional staff over the two years of the project was of major concern, as will be described below.

One of the major contributors to the context of this school is a sense of community. Dolores Goode, a member of our research team focusing on community portraiture in Boston, discovered that children arrive at the school from 12 different zipcodes. Nonetheless, there is a neighborhood feeling in the school, because 71% of the children walk to school; many teachers live in the area; and a sense of history and continuity is deliberately cultivated. Florence Hadley, the principal during 1988-89, was a resident of the neighborhood. She explained to me that there were many famous people who had been educated at the Ellis: judges, lawyers, artists, a prominent newscaster. She said that though the neighborhood had changed, "The Ellis was making a mighty comeback." On June 25, 1989, the school held an "Alumni Day," a well-attended Sunday event which celebrated the history of the school and pride in alumni accomplishments.

The Museum of the National Center for African-American Artists, a beacon for artists, is immediately behind the school; Elma Lewis, the founder and artistic director of this Center lives a few blocks away. Dolores Goode (1990) described the trips she took with students to the museum and to Elma Lewis' house. She also catalogued the economic and employment diversity within the community and described the many activities she developed collaboratively with teachers, parents, and community representatives to celebrate the children's families, cultures, and history, and to illuminate for all participants the relatedness of families, neighborhoods, and schools.

There is a second theme that impressed me as I talked with staff. These two years at the Ellis have been unusually threatening ones for the teachers and parents. In my first meeting with Tamarrah Lee, the key teacher during 1988-89, she showed me a newspaper clipping describing the shooting death of a fifteen year old. This boy was the brother of a fifth grader at the Ellis who had also experienced the death of his mother from a drug overdose, the murder of his father, and the jailing of another brother. In another meeting, teachers described the crisis generated among children when a child from this neighborhood was shot while sitting on a mailbox. In a discussion this spring, teachers of young children told me that mothers were keeping their children inside because of the danger on the streets, and children were arriving at school frustrated and overactive. When conversation was relaxed, teachers often talked about such incidents, partly to express their deep concern for the children and the multiple difficulties they were facing; partly to acknowledge the challenge of keeping teaching and learning the top priority in this context; partly to share their feelings of helplessness and rage at recognizing extreme need and being unable to solve the problems. For women who are powerful in their roles and who care deeply about the children they teach, the violence in Roxbury during these two years has been deeply personal and exhausting.

A third important theme in this school is relatedness. Although fragmentation by seniority and race has been an issue in the school (See Freedman, 1989), my observations of meetings, retreats, workgroups, and events during the spring of 1989 suggested that teachers and particularly the teacher leaders seemed to enjoy working together and worked together productively. If a project was jointly planned, it was more likely to happen. Although teachers were overwhelmed with meetings and workshops during the first year of the project, their commitment to the process and to each other was apparent. It was the teachers who wrote the application for inclusion in the SRO project. The Faculty Senate was powerful during Hadley's principalship. I sensed growing empowerment among the teachers and parents and the beginnings of a collective vision and collaborative style, as a volunteer group of teachers and parents met for three days at the

end of the school year to hammer out their priorities and action plans for the second year of the project.

However, between the June workshops and the beginning of the school year, there was a 40% turnover in staff, including the principal, assistant principal, and several teachers who had played key leadership roles in planning. This turnover and the loss of many predictable and important relationships were very hard on the staff who remained.

Partly in recognition of the degree of turnover, the new principal did not accept the recommendations of the previous year and reconstituted a planning council. Based on my interviews with the principal and observations at meetings, his first year priorities appeared to be setting clear expectations for teachers and children, establishing a computer lab to provide more individual attention to children, and evaluating teacher performance.

Noddings (1988) contrasts education which is based on a relational ethic, rooted in and dependent on natural caring, with the traditional academic approach to educational management, which emphasizes hierarchy, individualism, and technology. An emphasis on dialogue and reciprocity that Noddings (1988) highlights as essential to the relational ethic has not been dominant in the principal's relationships with staff this year. The clash of these academic and relational values during the second year of the project has been profound.

CHAPTER TWO

Home-School-Community Partnership at P.S. 111

In this chapter, I will examine the progress made by P.S. 111 in achieving success for all children by reporting on the first of the eight related components outlined above: developing a close partnership between home, school, and community. Fostering parent involvement at P. S. 111 was the major thrust of SRO during the first year of the project and an important priority during the second year. As will be documented later, the principal and most teachers originally felt that this (rather than success for all children) was SRO's mission. Consequently, there is an enormous amount of data to report on this topic.

To organize these data, I will follow in the footsteps of Joyce Epstein (e.g., 1987) in identifying five major types of parent involvement and by Jean Krasnow (**Schools Reaching Out: A Report of the First Year**, Section II, 1990) in using this typology to report first year results at P.S. 111. To Epstein's original typology will be added a sixth category focusing on school-community involvement.

Fostering Home-School-Community Partnerships

1. School Support for Families

Epstein's (1987) first category of parent involvement is **basic obligations of families**, or what parents do to support children's growth and development and build positive home conditions to support school learning.

Activities. During the first year, the key teacher and site facilitator were successful in:

1. establishing a Parents' Center;
2. organizing trips for parents and their children (theaters, Bear Mountain Park, Statue of Liberty, Con Edison Plant);
3. offering 14 workshops for parents, including six that helped parents to support children's learning (e.g., "Reading Aloud to Your Child," "Your Child's Writing: How You Can Help") and eight that extended parents' interests, skills, or ability to support their children's development (e.g., "Calisthenics," "Crafts," "How to Get Ready to Look for a Job," "Safe Streets, Safe Schools," "Tenants and Landlords;");
4. offering a course in English as a Second Language;
5. sending 50 children from the school to live with host families

during the summer supported by the Fresh Air Fund;

6. offering a career day for sixth graders and their teachers and parents.

During the second year of the project, activities designed to support families continued. Highlights included:

1. organizing trips to Bear Mountain, Radio City Music Hall, a movie, the Bronx Zoo and the Intrepid, a U.S. Navy Ship;

2. offering workshops to parents to support their children's learning (e.g., two math workshops, one taught by Delia Vargas, the key teacher, and Susan Gnoffo, a fifth grade teacher, and the second taught by Howard Weitzer, teacher of Chapter One remedial math; two on whole language taught by the early childhood language specialist, Maxine Erlanger, and the early childhood teacher trainer, Eve Mutchnick);

3. continuing to offer the course, "English as a Second Language;"

4. continuing to recruit children for the summer Fresh Air Fund experience.

Commentary. It is my belief that parent education activities should be based on parents' interests and needs, be well planned and implemented, offer a range of options to address different subgroups of parents, build connections between school personnel and parents, and support the school's mission (See Swap, 1987, for a rationale).

The initial selection of parent activities was made based on a survey of parents' interests and needs. About 200 parents came to a breakfast in the early days of the project, and about 100 completed the survey. Second-year activities were designed to repeat activities that attracted good attendance during Year 1, to appeal to parent interests based on informal inquiries, and to support the school's second year emphasis on family involvement in children's academic success. The initial survey was an efficient way of beginning a program of activities; additional formal polling of parent reactions and additional needs would have been useful.

The activities outlined were varied, well planned, and carefully coordinated by the key teacher, Delia Vargas. Attendance was good during both years (workshops had 10-25 participants; ESL classes attracted 30 registrants and 20 regulars; trips were so popular that places were raffled). Parent evaluation forms were collected initially, but not at all during Year 2. The effort required for coordinating so many different programs was significant, and the key teacher felt that monitoring parent responses to the quality of the activities or to their usefulness was a responsibility that could not also be assumed. According to

the key teacher, the range of activities did attract different subgroups of parents over the two-year period.

During the second year there was a strong effort made to involve school personnel in parent activities by inviting them to lead workshops. Howard Weitzer mentioned that after teaching his workshop on math, "parents who never spoke to me spoke to me in the school yard." He said that this contact (and other contacts between parents and teachers supported by the project) made parents feel less in awe of teachers and less intimidated. In terms of developing workshops to support the school's mission, the workshops for parents on whole language and math certainly built on the school's increasingly clear goal of increasing children's academic skills.

Establishing a room for parents in the school was a major condition of IRE's involvement. The Parent Center has attracted a regular group of about 20-30 Latino parents. They come to the Center to exchange conversation, identify and resolve problems identified by parents, and help out with school needs. These parents play many roles in the school: paraprofessionals, classroom volunteers, Parent Association officers, members of the School and Community Planning Council. The positive aspect of this development is that these parents have a strong voice in the affairs of the school. For example, they express concerns directly to the principal and to teachers and are often effective in initiating change. They help teachers who need an extra pair of hands (e.g., making classroom decorations, preparing food for school events, making plaques for outstanding students nominated by teachers). They monitor their children's learning and support their children's academic growth. During an interview with nine parents in the Center this December, they agreed that the project has helped them to become united; that they know what is expected of their children; and they know how they can help their children.

The controversial aspect of the Center is that several teachers and parents have expressed concerns that the group is exclusionary. To my knowledge, the group that is regularly involved in the Parent Center includes only Puerto Rican parents. The fact that some members of the group are related and that they enjoy spending time with each other inside and outside of the Parent Center creates a close-knit quality in their interaction that makes visitors to the Center feel like intruders. The most damaging report I heard was that the group speaks Spanish when English-speaking parents come into the Center and English when Spanish-speaking parents enter. I doubt that this is a consistent practice, but it is a fact that no other racial or ethnic subgroups have become closely tied to the school through the Parent Center during the two years of the project. Parents from the active preschool group (which had a separate room in the first year of the project) have also apparently ended their involvement during the second year of the project. I did ask Lourdes Lopez, the president

of the Parent Association whether they hoped to involve more parents in the Center. She said they did, but it was difficult since so many parents were not available during the school day.

The politics of the situation are complex. Because these parents work well with the principal and have access to the central administration, efforts of other parents or teachers to broaden Parent Center membership have been indirect or unsuccessful.

Recommendations. In order to sustain and build on the significant effort of reaching out to parents that was begun during the first two years, five ingredients would be useful:

1. maintenance of the coordinator or parent liaison role (at least on a part-time basis) to continue a program of parent education activities;
2. creating an advisory council of parents and teachers who could share the responsibility of planning parent activities and adapt programs to changing needs;
3. developing mechanisms for regularly assessing parents' needs, determining which parents are being reached, monitoring parents' responses to activities, and using these data in the advisory council to plan activities;
4. considering offering workshops that encompass three or four sessions so that networking among parents increases, and teachers offering workshops develop deeper connections with some parents.
5. encouraging additional involvement through the Parent Center by dealing with concerns of exclusion directly, exploring the value of additional parent participation, celebrating the many contributions made to the school by these parents, and perhaps changing some of the processes that sustain limited parent participation in the Center's activities.

2. Communications from School to Home

Activities. In this category, Epstein (1987) places those activities that inform parents about school programs and children's progress such as conferences, newsletters, memos, notices, or report cards. There are several efforts under this category.

1. The principal distributes a newsletter, approximately monthly, that includes information about parent activities (including SRO events), acknowledgements of good news, announcements, tips for home-learning activities, and other interesting information. It is written in English.
2. During the first year, a group of parents and teachers was invited to a three hour workshop on parent-teacher communication

led by the SRO staff.

3. During the first year, SRO staff organized a dinner for kindergarten and pre-kindergarten parents in which the principal provided information about the school, distributed informational kits, presented parents with a children's book, and introduced kindergarten and first-grade teachers.

4. The Parents Association has held parent meetings during the year to share information with parents (e.g. about the language initiative) and to discuss concerns (e.g., the need for school uniforms).

5. Memos to parents from Delia Vargas have been in Spanish and English.

6. The SRO staff compiled "A Telephone Guide to Neighborhood Resources" in both English and Spanish that included information about community agencies and organizations.

7. Several teachers and Vargas participated in the preparation of a major event at the school known as the Multicultural Celebration (June 4, 1990, spearheaded by a fifth grade teacher, Deserie Sanchez), whose purpose was to introduce parents and other members of the community to musical, oral, cultural, artistic, and culinary traditions of several national groups (e.g. Greek, Japanese, African, Latin American) and to the importance of multicultural themes in the school's curriculum.

8. The mini-grant program, which could be listed under several of Epstein's categories, served to enhance parents' understanding of the curriculum of particular classrooms. Mini-grants up to \$250 with a total budget of \$3000 per school were offered to teachers who would devise a project in which parents were involved. Seventeen teachers initiated fourteen different projects. For example, the language arts specialist and the early childhood teacher trainer chose to establish a resource center of books, poems, chants, songs, and games to foster language development in young children (parents were involved in visiting a model center; choosing materials, and setting up the center); the art teacher involved parents in learning about and making plaster gauze masks with their children; a special education teacher built on the children's interest in athletics to take a trip with parents and children to the Princeton University sports complex. Each project also included children writing about and sharing their experiences.

Commentary. The principal's regular newsletter is an important contribution to home communication because it is predictable and comprehensive. Emphasis on the parents' role in supporting their children's home learning is a consistent theme, as is the recognition and celebration of achievements of children, faculty, parents, and the school as a whole.

The problems of parent-teacher communication around children's performance, however, have not been addressed in a systematic way. As in many urban systems, most teachers do not communicate regularly with parents unless there is a problem. At P.S. 111, although an afternoon and an evening are set aside for conferences twice a year, participation of parents is optional. Teachers have agreed that the report card format needs improvement. The key teacher has not had the authority to tackle this issue alone, and it is a very complex one that involves all the barriers that make home-school connections difficult: union requirements, inflexible scheduling, buildings that are closed and locked in the evenings, working parents, teachers with families.

However, SRO has contributed to creating a climate and a context in which improved communication can be an important focus. Increased involvement of parents in school and increased contact between parents and teachers has made communication between these parents and teachers easier. Simply recognizing each other's faces is a beginning, and if parents have participated in a workshop, a class trip, or a project with a teacher it is easier for both to initiate a conversation about a concern with a child. I think that there is no question a connection has occurred between many parents and teachers this year, and this connection is an important accomplishment in itself.

The parents involved in the Parent Center have developed a more systematic and articulated approach to communication because of their connection with each other as a group, their identification of a leader or spokesperson, their access to the principal, and their awareness of what is going on in classrooms. As I learned from interviewing these parents, they have clarified their agendas for their children, and they are no longer afraid to identify their concerns to teachers or to the principal about school-wide needs, classroom discipline, their children's workload, or quality of teaching.

When I asked, "What do you do if you want to see something happen?" a parent responded, "If we really want something, we scream together. If there is only one mouth, nobody listens. We discuss, problem-solve, talk to Mr. Kinzelberg, keep after it every day or nothing will happen. We talk some more, get five or six parents together to talk to him."

Being able to admit and work through conflicts is an important stage in developing a true partnership. At this point, I feel that the parents and teachers see this evolution in different ways. For many teachers, the involvement of these parents seems to them to result in a loss in their own power. Resentment of this shift in power may be expressed as hostility or as concern about the group's exclusiveness.

But the parents and some teachers see the situation

differently. The parents mentioned several positive steps. For example, teachers approach them with information about their child. A parent said that now teachers will come and say, "Your child needs this, like more help in reading." Parents see themselves as advocates for improving the whole school, not just as advocates for their own children. As an example, a parent mentioned that they were advocates for the teachers to Kinzelberg when they knew that the teachers were feeling pressured by many "orders to do something, produce." They told Kinzelberg to "either help or leave it alone." They also felt they played a key role in securing additional support in the classroom from the district to help a new teacher.

Finally, parents sense some change in teachers' attitudes towards them. For example, a parent mentioned that last year teachers felt they were too nosy, but this year teachers asked for their opinions and their help. In one situation in which there was a conflict between the parents and a teacher about what was happening in the class, a parent said she felt that at first the teacher felt, "Who are you to tell me?" but now she feels that the teacher is willing to listen to her and looks up to her. I think the parents wish that more teachers would value their contributions and see them as allies rather than adversaries in the work of the school.

3. Families' Support of the School

Epstein (1987) includes in her category "parent involvement at school" parent volunteers, parent support at student performances, sports, or other events, and parent involvement in workshops for their own education or training.

Activities. Family support for P.S. 111 occurs in many formal and informal ways. The more visible components over the two years included:

1. the parent volunteer program;
2. parent response to teachers' requests for help (e.g., preparing classroom materials, helping with bulletin boards or decorations, contributing to a school craft display, preparing food for school events, taking graduation pictures);
3. parent support for field trips;
4. parent support for classroom activities through the mini-grant program.

The key teacher and first year site facilitator Ann Sand were very successful in initiating a parent and community volunteer program to help teachers in the classroom. Last year there were 23 volunteers, eight of whom were parents. Most of the other

volunteers were from the Rockefeller Foundation. This year, there were seven parent volunteers, six of whom were repeaters, and several community volunteers from IBM, Newsweek, and elsewhere. In both years, volunteers were offered training through the New York City Schools Volunteer Program. Despite teachers' considerable initial concerns about the potential problems of involving volunteers (see section on teacher attitudes), they have been generally enthusiastic about volunteers' contributions. At the beginning of this year, there were more requests for volunteer help than could be accommodated.

I spoke with three parents who were in the volunteer program. Not only had they gained more respect for the teacher's role ("Now I understand how the teacher feels. She has so much patience! How can she do it?"), but they also felt that they had something important to contribute. They described how they were able to talk to children and develop good relationships with them. I was told stories about two students who were acting out in class, whom they managed to get back on track. With one child, they insisted to Kinzelberg that the child be suspended until the mother came in to discuss the problem. Within a week of the mother's arrival at school, the child's behavior improved. With another child, a negative cycle seemed to turn into a positive one through the intervention of a volunteer. The parent gave him extra responsibilities, told him, "You're really a nice kid," and asked for help with a school project.

Parent volunteering with the art teacher and the librarian seemed to be most consistent and valued by the teachers. Carmen Morella, for example, accomplished several important tasks in the library such as selecting books, compiling a summer reading list, shelving non-fiction books, and supervising the A-V room. Several volunteers have worked in the pre-K room. There are several unofficial volunteers working with teachers in the kindergarten, first, third, and fifth grades.

The amount of parent help in the school for projects and field trips has increased enormously during the years of SRO. Some parents are recruited by teachers themselves, but the mini-grants escalated this effort by introducing parents into the classrooms of 14 teachers in meaningful ways. For example, in her evaluation of the mini-grant program, Marlene Saunders, the art teacher, explained that parents functioned as resource persons in her project to make masks for each child, informing children about materials and methods and helping to make masks. Nina Frankel, the pre-kindergarten teacher, involved parents and grandparents in a trip to Brooklyn Botanical Garden, to extend her unit on growing things and to "study first-hand what we have been doing in class." She concluded that all participants really enjoyed the trip, and having family along made the experience really special for the children.

Commentary. Lightfoot (1978) speaks eloquently about the importance of having parents in the school, particularly when the children are from diverse cultural backgrounds:

It is important to recognize that the presence of parents in the school not only provides more adults to teach reading or offer help and support to children but also transforms the culture of the school. With these black mothers present, there is no way that the curriculum and environment could remain unchanged. Even if the content of the lesson appears the same on paper, the transmission of the lesson takes on a different quality and character when presented by the mothers. Even if the concepts are unfamiliar and alien to the child's experience, the mother-teacher style of interaction, her face, and her character are not strange. It feels like home (p. 173).

The volunteer program, the mini-grants, and individual parent-teacher collaborations have been very important in supporting the school, increasing connections between parents and teachers, and increasing parents' understanding of the school. Vargas has done a fine job of coordinating the volunteer program, arranging training for volunteers through the NYC Schools Volunteer Program, and honoring the volunteers' contributions with a thank you breakfast co-sponsored by SRO and Kinzelberg at which each volunteer received a gift.

One concern is that neither the key teacher nor the Parent Association were successful in expanding the involvement of parent volunteers during the second year of the project. I do not understand why this was the case and feel it should be further explored. Another concern is that teachers sometimes complained that volunteer help was inconsistent or unpredictable. There was no programmatic vehicle to identify and deal with concerns that might arise from parents or teachers, and such a mechanism would be useful if the program continues.

Recommendations.

1. I am concerned that without a part-time coordinator to identify teacher needs, solicit parent and community volunteers, offer training to volunteers, monitor problems, and celebrate successes, the program will disappear. The momentum that has been generated, the parent-teacher connections that have started, and the curriculum enrichment that has resulted need to be sustained.
2. The \$3000 used to support the mini-grant program resulted in exciting, diverse, creative projects that involved parents,

connected home and school, and enriched the curriculum. Discretionary monies available to the school could not be better used.

4. Family Involvement in Learning at Home

Epstein (1987) includes in this category "parent-initiated activities or child-initiated requests for help, and ideas or instruction for parents to monitor or assist their own children at home or learning activities that are coordinated with children's classwork" (p. 25).

Activities. Several activities supported parent involvement in learning activities at home. In addition to the workshops mentioned under "School support for families," which helped parents to understand their children's curriculum, provided ideas about ways of extending children's learning, increased parents' familiarity with crafts and materials, and provided instruction in how to support children's self-esteem, the following activities occurred:

1. The Toybrary, whose purpose was to establish a lending library of toys, games, and books for use at home;
2. Selection and duplication of home learning materials by SRO staff, in order to share with teachers useful handouts and materials developed by other programs;
3. Establishment of a sub-committee of the School Community Planning Council called "Home Activities for Parents and Children"
4. Kinzelberg's Read-Aloud program, which encouraged parents to read to their child(ren) every night. A "Parent Read Aloud Honor Roll" was posted outside the principal's office. Though not an SRO project, this has been an important effort to extend children's learning at home.
5. Outreach workers were identified and trained to contact parents identified by teachers as "hard-to-reach."

Commentary. The toybrary was a good idea that suffered from several problems. Under the leadership of Vargas and Sand, it opened last spring with a celebration and toy raffle. New materials got stolen over the summer, and re-opening was delayed until a lockable storage cabinet and willing parent managers could be found. The second opening was in April rather than September and did not attract a lot of use, perhaps because it was not sufficiently publicized.

I have acquired limited information about teachers' dissemination of home learning materials. Vargas reported that she had duplicated four copies of the SRO packet for teachers, and

there was no formal reporting by the Planning Council's home learning subcommittee after December, when the goals of the Council changed. In the earlier meetings, several interesting ideas were generated for consideration. Parents participating in the second year workshops taught by teachers were given materials to take home, but I do not know whether they were used by parents or seen as helpful to them. Vargas did not monitor this aspect of the project's outreach, but this would be a fruitful area for further data gathering.

Kinzelberg's Read Aloud program was successful in involving parents as indicated by long lists of parents on the Honor Roll each month and parent interviews. Parents from the Parent Center whom I interviewed (11) all said that they were reading to their child(ren) and that their children were reading to them. One parent said the books "motivate the children, interest them, but interest us, too." Parents reported changes in their children: one was less shy about participating in class; all said their children read more; one mother reported that her son talked more about his work at school, and the teacher said that he was opening up more in class; siblings were reading to each other; another child had gone from writing one or two sentences to two or three pages; one said she did not know whether her child's grades would improve, but she could see that his learning was more advanced. Although this was no controlled experiment, the parents' perceptions that their efforts were important, that they were supporting school efforts, and that they were helping their children learn were all positive results.

There have been many efforts to inform parents and involve them in the whole language initiative that was begun by Kinzelberg last year and launched throughout the school this year. The SRO workshops on "Reading Aloud to Your Child," "The Writing Process," "Beginning Reading," "Helping with Homework," "Your Child's Writing: How Can You Help?" all supported this theme. So too did the kindergarten and pre-kindergarten dinner for parents that SRO sponsored last year, the Parents' Association meeting last January where Kinzelberg spoke to over 50 parents about the language arts program and how they could be involved, and the 115 page illustrated collection of children's writings that was published with SRO funds and widely distributed to children and parents.

Parents have been invited to participate in thematic language arts projects through the mini-grants and teachers' individual efforts. The effort and depth of this integrated effort is exciting and productive. The school's writing and reading scores were up significantly this year (See Chapter 3), and I would anticipate more gains next year.

The outreach workers participated in a two-session workshop on working with parents that included learning about personality styles. They made home visits and telephone calls to about 15

parents whom teachers were having difficulty contacting. Vargas mentioned her own experience in accompanying one of the outreach workers to the home of a parent whose child was being evaluated. This outreach did result in the parent attending the Pupil Personnel Committee meeting. The focus of the Outreach Workers was on sharing information with parents about the school and its programs, explaining strategies for working with their children at home, and encouraging their involvement at school. What seemed to limit the scope of activity of the outreach workers in New York was concern about the safety of outreach workers when visiting homes and when making evening visits without being able to check in.

What I learned from these experiments was that parents responded most readily to home learning activities that they chose, that fit into their family routines, and that they found motivating for themselves and their children. I expect that clear and consistent messages from the school about the school's emphasis on promoting reading and writing were also helpful to parents. Activities that required significant monitoring, organization, or outreach on the part of school personnel did not fare well. I expect that teachers' busy schedules, fears about safety in the neighborhood, and lack of experience with successful models of home learning may all have played a part in this outcome. Nonetheless, I find the level of parent activity at home very encouraging and the emphasis on reading aloud and workshops a very appropriate initial step in this area.

Recommendations.

1. A logical next step in this sequence would be to have staff investigate successful models for learning at home used elsewhere, to formally evaluate what additional information or exchange might be useful to parents, and to make sure that parents continued to have access to educational materials that were varied, culturally sensitive, and age appropriate.
2. Involvement of parents around specific class achievement goals or particular curricular themes might increase the likelihood of parental engagement. Projects that are too disruptive of family routines or based on a deficit model are not likely to succeed.
3. Making use of Jennifer Robinson's newly collected thesis data on parent involvement at P.S. 111 might be another method for identifying who is not being reached and why, and adapting new outreach strategies accordingly. For example, parents who are not fluent in English, parents from particular cultural or national groups, or homeless parents may be consistently excluded.
4. Regardless of what might be done in the future, it is important to recognize and celebrate the successes that have already occurred in reaching out to parents to help them support their children's learning at home.

5. Parent Involvement in Governance and Advocacy

Epstein (1987) includes in this category "parents taking decision-making roles in the PTA/PTO, advisory councils, or other committees or groups at the school, district, or state level" (p. 25). At P.S. 111, parents have played an important role in the evolution of a formal school governance council, and they have also shaped important decisions through informal contacts with the principal and through Parents Association activities.

Activities and Commentary. In her first year report, Krasnow identified parent involvement in governance and advocacy as a weak area, mentioning only the initial parent survey, informal conversations and meetings with parents, Parent Association/SRO collaboration on joint activities, and belated involvement of parents on the state-mandated Comprehensive School Improvement Program committee (which did not work effectively).

During the second year of the project, the establishment and development of the School Community Planning Council was the primary thrust of IRE at P.S. 111. Don Davies drafted a plan for the Council and hired Dr. Barbara Jackson from Fordham University to be Project Director in New York, primarily to work with the principal and to facilitate the initiation and implementation of the Council (See Chapter Two for a more extended discussion of the Council, as well as Barbara Jackson's two reports for IRE in December 1989 and July 1990).

Parents played an important role in the structure and scheduling of the Council. Of the 22 members of the Council, five were parents, representing the Parents Association, pre-K parents, Chapter 1 parents, and two parents at large. Jon Moscow, the parent coordinator from District 2 was also a member. Parents were invited to join each of the subcommittees that was created by the Council in the fall. Parents' schedules were carefully considered in selecting meeting dates, and one meeting was set up and then changed to accommodate parent schedules. Nonetheless, parent attendance was spotty. Although the president of the Parents' Association came quite consistently (seven of nine meetings), generally only two or three of the five parents participated at each session (attendance was taken and a record of attendance at the nine meetings is available).

Parents certainly did not dominate the discussions. At each of the three meetings that I attended, parents did not speak unless directly asked for an opinion, and even then, they did not share freely. It is not unusual for parents to have difficulty finding their voices in governance groups (e.g., Malen and Ogawa, 1988; Williams, 1988), and this may take time, training for Council members, and encouragement.

At P.S. 111, the task of creating a smoothly functioning group

that would make crucial decisions about school improvement and budget was enormously demanding. The different constituencies had had, I think, no sustained successful experiences in working collaboratively to make decisions. Moreover, a value system that supported open dialogue and non-hierarchical decision-making was not part of the school culture. Learning how to work together takes time, but initially the group could not find more than two hours a month to meet. The school did not easily accommodate the big holes that were created by the simultaneous release of 13 school personnel during the school day, and both parents and faculty were reluctant to meet at night. Finally, participants were not sure whether the committee would be worth their time. Although members occasionally voiced concerns that they had been asked to bring to the Council, initial meetings were primarily taken up with presentations and reports of the six subcommittees, and none of these problems was included on an agenda or systematically addressed. By December, parents, teachers, and administrators all expressed some dissatisfaction to me about the slow speed of startup. Parents and teachers also voiced discontent at the absence of dialogue, failure to discuss the really important issues that were affecting the school, and lack of clarity about what the Council was intended to accomplish.

These concerns were raised by teachers at the December meeting, leading to a decision to change the process of the group. SRO facilitators were used at extended January and February meetings. At these meetings, participants broke into groups to discuss their ideas about the goals of the Council, how it should operate, and what its priorities should be for the remainder of the year.

The single concern expressed by parents was the need for an after-school program for children. This goal became the focus of one of two work groups set up to implement the consensus priority of the Council, which was to provide more individual attention to children to support learning and prevent behavioral problems. (The other workgroup's task was to explore innovative ways of reducing the teacher-pupil ratio.) All but one member of the Council volunteered to work on one of these work groups. (The one member was a parent who had just joined the group as a replacement for the pre-K parent).

The process of reaching consensus was an honest one, in which important school concerns were raised, conflicts were openly discussed and resolved, and agreement was not forced. The group actually cheered at the end of the February meeting, after consensus was reached and specific workgroups had been formed! In conversations after the meeting, concerns lingered about whether individuals would be punished for speaking out and whether the group's recommendations would be carried out, but these were very natural concerns after a meeting which altered the normative interaction and decision-making patterns in the school.

An after-school program was set up very quickly, for the months of March, April, and May. Parents had been polled to establish their interest in having their children participate, and 350 parents indicated an interest in after-school care. The subcommittee decided to offer the service for free. Since support was available for services to homeless children and some money was available from the stipend of "Rewarding Success", after-school care was offered to the homeless and to two additional groups of 25 children at the 2-3 and 4-6 grade levels. Children received individual tutorial, help with homework, snacks, and physical and recreational activities.

Two parents and a paraprofessional were included in the workgroup. The chair of the group, Howard Weitzer, expressed pleasure about the process of the group, though he mentioned some difficulties in pulling everyone together. One of the parents, though pleased at the accomplishments of the group, indicated that sometimes she was not notified of meetings and decisions were made in her absence.

In summary, there was a significant and largely successful effort made to involve parents in the newly initiated School and Community Planning Council. The role of parents in decision-making was acknowledged and respected, and their participation was sought. Not surprisingly, it continues to be difficult for the parent representatives to feel at ease in the group, and the limited numbers of parents who actually came to meetings made it difficult to develop a clear parent presence. Interactions between parents and teachers on the after school workgroup sound like they were good, but still a little stiff. It may be that parents need to stop waiting to be informed and find ways to follow-up with teachers; it may be that teachers need to be more conscientious about sharing authority even when they feel pushed by time and circumstances to make a quick decision.

Parents were perhaps more effective in working towards their goals when speaking directly with Kinzelberg or involving the Parents Association. For example, parental concerns about a new teacher led to the arrival of additional adult help in her classroom, as mentioned above. A Parents Association request for school uniforms led to the acceptance of that recommendation by the principal, despite significant objection from several teachers after they heard of the decision.

I think the parents who are regularly in the Parent Center have begun to discover their strengths as advocates for their children and for school improvement. Part of their strength has emerged from their solidarity and support for each other. Another part of their strength emerges from their connections to the District office and their involvement in Kinzelberg's selection as principal. Despite their power as seen from the outside, I do not think they see themselves as empowered. When I asked a group of

these parents, "Are you leaders in the school?" they unanimously replied "NO!" and said they wouldn't want to be. When I asked what they did want to be, the reply was, "Just parents."

As aware as they may be about occasional successes in initiating change, they are also aware that they are often placed in supportive roles, as when they are asked to make food or decorations for an upcoming event rather than also being involved in planning. Moreover, they are aware of hostility from some teachers and parents over what is perceived as their exclusiveness. If members of this group feel somewhat threatened and devalued within the school (at least by some), it is understandable that they might be reluctant to reach out to new parents, who might have different goals and new strategies for achieving them. It is not yet apparent that it is in the interests of this group to reach out to new parents, and until these circumstances change, (e.g., if the parent group needs additional parent support to achieve a common goal), I see little likelihood for a shift in their policy or practice. This seems to be an understandable developmental phase in the evolution of parent involvement in governance and advocacy.

6. School-Community Involvement

Part of the vision of the Schools Reaching Out project was that the target schools would reach out to the community as well as to parents to support success for all children. This focus became increasingly important in the second year of the project. Many of the activities listed below were coordinated or supported by the key teacher, Delia Vargas, who was also the chair of the Council's School-Community Connections subcommittee.

Activities. Listed below is a sample of the range of collaborations that have occurred and are emerging, including:

1. the involvement of volunteers from the community. Whether from enterprises (IBM, Newsweek, the Rockefeller Foundation) or from interested residents, the key teacher coordinated the training and deployment of about 15 tutors from the community each year. One of the most interesting projects that evolved was the creation of a newspaper by students in the fifth and sixth grades with the support of a volunteer from Newsweek.

The New York City Volunteers contributed to the school by training the volunteers and sending a speaker to a Parent Association meeting. Volunteers from Equitable Life wrote and produced skits and made their own costumes and scenery to introduce kindergarten and first grade classes to the summer opportunities provided by the Fresh Air Fund.

2. the involvement of key community persons in governance and consultation. Barbara Jackson from Fordham University has been a key support for the school, helping to set up a career day for

sixth graders, consultant to and member of the Council, consulting to the principal, and directing the New York operations of IRE. John Calhoun, the director of Hartley House, a neighborhood community agency, has been a member of the Council and a participant on several subcommittees. At his initiative, plans are underway for a greenhouse at Hartley House to be used to enrich the science curriculum, and he continues to express his vision of school-community partnership for common goals. Ten children from P.S. 111 were involved in a volunteer mentor program at Hartley House which involved one-to-one tutorial help to children one evening a week.

3. the involvement of the Whitney Museum of American Art in helping Sanchez' fifth grade class to develop and display a mural on racial harmony. Artists at the Whitney worked with the children, and an evening reception was held in the adjoining gallery of Equitable Life for children, parents, and teachers (half the teachers came) to celebrate their accomplishment. The New York City Ballet Company offered a special program to the fourth grade students.

4. the participation of the community in the Multicultural Celebration. A large committee of teachers led by Sanchez planned a whole day of activities to help children, parents, and faculty to learn about and appreciate different cultures. In the evening portion of the festivities, over 700 people from the community joined in the festivities, where singing, story-telling, musical demonstrations, food and crafts and much more were shared.

5. the contribution of funds from Iphigenie Ochs Sulzberger through the Bank Street School of Education helped to publish the second edition of P.S. 111: Writers on the Move and from the Chase Manhattan Bank to support the publication of The Ultimate How-To Book.

6. the collaboration with personnel of the naval ship Intrepid and the Fresh Air Fund to provide special holiday and summer programs for children.

7. the community portrait project initiated by Alfredo Mathew from SRO that led to a collaborative effort among children of the fifth and sixth grades, teachers, parents, and community members to enrich children's understanding of their community. Making maps of the neighborhood; visiting a restaurant in Harlem and interviewing the restaurant owner; visiting a theater, seeing a play, and interviewing the stage manager and technical director were all part of this project.

8. Chase Manhattan's recent interest in "adopting" P.S. 111, which would offer the potential for a more extensive connection with a community organization, including management training, volunteers, visits, and resources for the school. This proposal was brought to

the Council, and Council members were invited to modify the School Profile and Needs Assessment, as developed by Chase Manhattan representatives who visited the school, as a prelude to a formal agreement.

9. An array of other connections to the resources of the district and system of the New York City Schools, which offered school consultation (e.g., Jon Moscow, the District 2 Parent Coordinator who was a faithful and insightful member of the Council and Anthony Alvarado, district superintendent, who offered consultation and support for SRO); resources (e.g., the PIP grant to support Parent Involvement Activities); and training for teachers and parents (e.g., workshops offered for parents through the Parent Involvement and Empowerment Network of District 2).

Commentary. The boundaries of P.S. 111 have become much more permeable. The array of resources that are being used by the school in the form of grants, training, consultation, and enrichment experiences for children is very encouraging. Vargas has been very active in making and developing contacts that could be of use to the school, and Kinzelberg has also made community outreach one of his personal priorities. I feel that there is an emerging sense that if school personnel want to do something, it will be possible to secure the necessary resources. This is not a characteristic attitude in most urban schools, and certainly SRO's financial support and its empowerment of the Council to use SRO funds to support their goals has encouraged this optimistic attitude.

As expected, P.S. 111 is still in the initial stages of developing a true partnership with one or several community resources. Zacchei and Mirman (1986) define three stages of school-business partnerships: support, cooperation, and collaboration. Currently, the focus of the school's efforts is to secure resources from others to support goals identified by school personnel. Joint planning and merging of resources to accomplish a joint mission are still in the future.

As Zacchei and Mirman suggest:

...partners often begin their relationship by planning activities that have a low level of risk, commitment, and coordination. It takes time to establish a mutual vision and working style. Successfully executing small-scale activities helps generate enthusiasm, create momentum, and solidify commitments. The Support stage represents a natural starting place from which partnerships evolve, often during several years, provided the active parties have realistic expectations (1986, p. 15).

Progress toward Home-School-Community Partnership: A Reflection

In other IRE publications (Swap, 1990a, 1990b) I have outlined three models of home-school partnership. In the first, which I have called School to Home Transmission, there are two premises: that continuity of expectations, values, and attitudes between home and school encourages achievement, and that it is school personnel who should identify the values and practices that form the basis for school success. The second model I have called Interactive Learning. This model is based on an explicit premise of mutual respect between parents and educators, and the primary goal of partnership is to incorporate the values, history, and learning styles of minority families into the fabric of the school and curriculum. In the third model, Partnership for School Success, success for **all children** is the rallying cry, and educators welcome parents as essential partners, assets, experts, helpers, and resources in the search for strategies that will achieve success for all children.

My research suggests that over these two years P.S. 111 has moved from a stance in which parents were primarily viewed as threats or barriers to children's success to a stance in which parents are generally seen as useful and important in accomplishing the school's objectives. Thus, I see the school as working with parents according to the School to Home Transmission model. Three lines of evidence support this contention: the dramatic increase in parent involvement in the school documented in the many preceding pages; evidence from the interviews of the teacher research team, and my own interviews with teachers and parents.

Increase in Parent Involvement at School to Support School Success. Evidence that parents are seen as useful in accomplishing the school's objectives includes the changes in practice to involve parents in accomplishing school goals, such as the Read Aloud program, the involvement of parents in the mini-grants, the increasing requests for volunteers in the classroom (22 this year), the many informal requests made by teachers for parent support, and the many other examples documented in the preceding pages.

Interview Data from the Teacher Research Team. Evidence that parents are not yet considered true partners in the effort to achieve success for all children includes data from the teacher research team's interviews of their colleagues. These data were collected in September and October 1989 and summarized and reported to the Council at their October meeting. When teachers were asked by their colleagues "How would you define desirable parent involvement in your school?", seven of the 15 responses included some version of assisting the classroom teacher. A few included implied criticism or concern about parents' potential involvement, suggesting that "Parents should not come in to spy and gossip;" that involvement should be "calendared, useful, and purposeful;" and that parents should help out but "not with their own kids."

It is certainly not abnormal that teachers who have not had direct experience with parent involvement in classrooms would have such concerns. Other teachers mentioned their hopes for better relationships, an interest in a resource room for parents, the possibility of offering parents workshops in English or seminars on early childhood education. One teacher's reply captured the essence of the School to Home Transmission model:

First an educated parent body, informed about our goals for their children in our school. From goals, come questions, and then we should hold workshops for the parents so they can be aware of what we are teaching and how we teach and the results we expect. Third, we need their support; we are a team. They need to be a part of their children's education. That doesn't mean they sit in the class, but by being supportive at home, their involvement is very important."

Note that in the first sentence, the teacher does not speak about jointly defining goals, nor does she see the school as belonging to teachers, parents, and the community. Moreover, parents are not seen as necessary contributors to a dialogue that would define hopes or expectations about what is taught and what results might be expected. Nonetheless, parents are seen as being very important in furthering their children's education by supporting the goals of the school.

Comments from another teacher, however, suggest that there might be teachers willing to move to a more fully articulated partnership if exposed to productive experiences with parents. When asked whether she had "concerns about the expanded role of parents in the school and in their children's education," she replied:

Not too much. I used to work with Head Start, and it was part of the program to have parents in our class. I'm used to parents in my class. It can be really annoying if you aren't used to it. It was good, training the parent. They saw how things were done. They taught us a few things. There were different cultures, and they taught us their way of doing things, and they learned from us. It is not a one-way thing.

My Interviews with Teachers. My own interviews with teachers revealed a range of responses. The most negative attitude toward parents came from a teacher who had not been involved in the project ("I stay in my classroom. I don't get involved."), and

continued to see parents as unresponsive and unsupportive of their children's education ("I ask parents to write in their child's notebook, and they don't respond." "They're not checking the children's work." "What I wish is that the parents would learn English!") Another teacher discussed the pathology she saw in the families, especially families of children in the "bottom classes." Drugs, alcohol abuse, child abuse, plagued the families of her children, and she felt she needed to talk about these issues with families and help them find support (which she did) before the children could move on.

Other teachers were definitely supportive of partnership. For example, another teacher believed in partnership to achieve success for children, but she also felt that as the teacher she should identify the terms of the partnership. She said she told parents, "I want to raise a scholar!" and described how she wrote letters, telephoned parents, and persuaded parents to follow through on rewards and punishments at home: "I want to talk to you as a fellow parent...."; "I need your help." "Use T.V. as a reward") so that children in her class would be successful. She wanted parents to be involved in the class, began the year with a big "Welcome Parents!" sign, and consistently involved parents in field trips and projects.

Another teacher was closest to embracing the concept of partnership as a route to success for all children. She was enthusiastic about the change in parent involvement she saw because of SRO. She said, "Parents never involved themselves before they opened the Parents' Room. Now they stay all day....It's the children of the parents who are usually around who excel. Teachers are more attentive to their children because parents are keeping a close eye on them." She mentioned that these parents extend themselves if needed and that they had helped her a lot. She also said that she would like to see different ethnic groups come in, "But that takes time." This teacher ended the interview by saying, "In this school, there's been a lack of success because we haven't included the whole child. Kids need parents, too -- to help with school, with homework. The more parent involvement you have, the more success you have."

My Interviews with Parents. With respect for the confidentiality of sources, I would suggest that parents in the Parent Center feel that SRO's goals have been to "educate parents how to be united, to see what children really need in school, to get better parent involvement for the school, and to improve the school." Parents felt that several good things had happened. They have learned what is expected of their kids. They have become more involved. They have learned how they can help. Teachers come to them with concerns about their children. They have attended workshops and learned about teaching reading. They have gotten more involved in reading to their own children, seen positive changes in their children's learning and self-esteem, and

contributed to the growth of other children through the volunteer program. They have helped to make positive changes for the whole school by working with the principal for classroom changes and with the Council for the after-school program. They understand more about how the teachers feel when in the classroom. One parent said, "We keep learning with them."

I would conclude that from the perspective of these very involved parents, there is still room for evolution towards partnership. Although the parents were enthusiastic that more teachers were asking for their help or for their opinion, I gather that sometimes parents are not informed of committee meetings, and sometimes they are not included when decisions are made. (A good bit of this might be due to a need to discover more consistent and efficient means for communication among colleagues throughout the school). They are sometimes placed in assistant roles when they would also like to be involved in planning an event, (though they do not seem to directly ask for a more expanded role). Finally, I have heard enough concerns expressed by teachers about this group's exclusiveness and their influence (power) in the school to conclude that there are some teachers who have not been convinced that this group's contribution is improving the school.

Jennifer Robinson's Parent Survey. It would also be useful to gather data from parents who have not been as fully involved in the school. Robinson is a doctoral student at Teachers College, Columbia University, who is gathering data for her dissertation on parent involvement at P.S. 111. She developed a survey that taps: what activities parents do with their children at home, the nature of parents' contact with the school, parents feelings about different aspects of the school, and parents' views about what P.S. 111 is doing that is helping their child, posing barriers to or easing their involvement, how P.S. 111 could be improved. Of 514 surveys mailed in May 1990, 240 were returned. The data are in the process of being analyzed.

Conclusions and a Developmental Model of Partnership. My conclusion about progress toward partnership at P.S. 111 is that there are many individual differences in attitudes and practices of teachers and parents, but that the median has shifted towards valuing parent involvement according to the School to Home Transmission model. Many teachers' concerns about parent involvement have been lessened either through their own first-hand positive experiences with parents or through their observations of other teacher's positive experiences. One teacher, speaking to me during the last few days of the project summarized the changes this way: "Attitudes are changing towards parents. They are a little more positive. Now they see them as helpers they could use." Whereas formerly teachers may have worried that parents would not have the appropriate "background" to be able to help out, now they "wonder how we would have done without them." The teacher continued that the parents are seen as "very good, trained, and not

just wondering about their own child. Parents have a broader perspective." The teacher also felt that parent attitudes had changed toward teachers. "They are not as in awe. They see teachers as easier to get along with and don't feel intimidated. The meetings between teachers and parents with food and chit-chat have made it easier for teachers to send home notes and communicate with parents. Parents take immediate steps to respond. More parents are responding immediately, and that helps with discipline. I've sent a lot of work home with parents, lots of materials, and parents aren't intimidated."

Yet this teacher also felt there was more to be done. "Some things have happened. So much time has been spent. There are very good feelings. It's just starting to gel. What's going to happen? Delia's done a fantastic job of bringing parents and teachers together both ways. We need one more year of funding. Is that going to happen?"

It is my opinion, too, that further support is necessary to gel and extend the progress that has been made toward home-school community partnership at P.S. 111. A model of a sequence of program activities and leadership activities is presented to aid in evaluating progress at P.S. 111, and in anticipating future steps and what would need to occur to accomplish them (See Table 1 and Table 2).

Table 1

Leadership Tasks

Involve school administration
fully

Create representative home-
school leadership team

Set up structures that support
joint decision-making and
facilitate communication

Offer training to leadership
team

Clarify goals

Monitor programs and team
functioning and adapt them to
support goals

In this model, the leadership team may enter either at the top of the sequence, as a prelude to initiating positive contacts for parents, or as also frequently happens, at step 3 in the sequence, after positive contacts and responsive programs have begun to overcome initial resistance to home-school collaboration. Ideally, the leadership team would represent parents, teachers, and administrators, and model in its own decisions and process the partnership that is sought within the school as a whole.

Table 2

Program Sequence

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Initiate positive contacts
between parents and teachers | |
| 6. Widen circle of
involvement and leadership | 2. Develop activities
that respond to needs
and interests of
parents and teachers |
| 5. Develop activities and
mechanisms to share and celebrate
accomplishments | 3. Clarify joint
mission |
| 4. Develop activities that
support the mission | |
-

From the perspective of this model, it is clear that P.S. 111 made progress in facilitating positive contacts between parents and teachers. It is also the case that programs were offered to parents that responded to their interests and needs as adults (the Parent Center, ESL classes, field trips, workshop on job interviewing) as well as their interests and needs as parents (workshops on supporting their children's learning, home learning activities, mini-grant involvement). Teachers were offered programs that supported their professional roles (mini-grants, workshops on whole language), and activities were offered to some teachers that were sustaining and empowering in their roles as adults (teacher research team, research seminar: see Chapter 3).

The ideal state of affairs during this stage is that both sides of the partnership feel that some of their needs and interests are being met through the collaboration, and joint activities are based on mutual respect and joint planning. I think

the fact that many teachers do not feel secure in their relationships with each other or the administration and that few feel empowered and appreciated makes reaching out and sharing power with parents very difficult.

P.S. 111 made substantial progress in setting up a representative leadership team (the School and Community Planning Council) that is responsible for school improvement and home-school-community collaboration. However, last year the Council did not plan activities for parents or for parents and teachers together. The key teacher was responsible for planning and coordinating parent activities, and Jean Krasnow from the IRE staff was responsible for the mini-grants, the most sustained joint activity of parents and teachers.

What the Council did accomplish, of course, was progress in identifying a joint mission, and the planning and implementation of a children's after-school program as one of two activities to support that mission. Efforts were made by Council members to keep their constituencies informed, but no celebration occurred: the last meeting of the year had to be canceled.

P.S. 111 is now at a turning point in its progress towards partnership. The sequential model presented is also a cyclical model, and it is important to continue to broaden the base of involvement through positive contacts and joint activities, and it is important to continue to identify and solve problems in communication and joint decision making in the leadership team and in those joint activities. At this point, the leadership of future home-school partnership activities is unclear (See Chapter 3).

However, seen within the sequential framework outlined above, it is clear that important progress has been made toward partnership, and that some of the project's current limitations should be seen not as failures but as sequential steps not yet reached. With additional training, support, and leadership, success in reaching out to more parents and teachers, clarification of the mission, improvement in the Council's decision-making and conflict resolution skills, and regular monitoring of progress toward the mission could occur. Consolidation of a collaborative model based on School to Home Transmission might be an initial goal; building toward Partnership for School Success is a model that may emerge with increased successful parent-teacher collaboration on common goals.

CHAPTER THREE

Building the Scaffolding for Success for All Children at P.S. 111

Attitudes about Success for All Children

A key ingredient in building success for all children is creating the expectation among parents, teachers, and administrators that all children can be successful. This is not a trivial challenge. Seeley (1989) borrows Kuhn's term "paradigm shift" to capture the idea that a fundamental restructuring of attitudes and cognitions is required to accept the idea that all children, and particularly all poor, urban, minority children can be successful in school. In fact, Seeley feels that **two** fundamental shifts in attitude must occur to achieve this goal, the second being the conviction among educators that the **only** way to achieve success for all children is through home-school-community partnership rather than through the typical approach of delegating all responsibility for children's education to the school.

Data. I encountered no consistent expectation among teachers and principals that all children could be successful in school. Kinzelberg's primary objective for the school was at the outset of the project and has continued to be "a more literate environment," and he has identified very clear and consistent expectations for the implementation of a whole language initiative (see next section). He saw having all children at grade level as an indication of a successful school, but also indicated that the type of children that were coming to school now were much more difficult.

Both principals certainly endorsed and championed the concept of improvement, or "moving toward excellence." When I asked Felix Polanco, the assistant principal, whether he thought success for all children was an achievable objective, he said that the word that came to mind was "perseverance," and that meant not giving up on any child. He did not believe that every child in the school could be at the 99th percentile, but that "everyone could be on the road of achieving success." When asked whether parent involvement was necessary to achieve success for all children, he said: "If parents are in tune, more cooperative in helping us achieve, more informed and equipped to help us, the easier our job will be."

Of the six teachers and three specialists whom I asked directly about the concept "success for all children," most teachers did not associate it with SRO and most had reservations about the possibility, given their concerns about the kinds of children who were in school these days. Children with handicaps, who were non-English-speaking, whose families were chemically

dependent or abusive were seen as posing severe problems to traditional educational practices and unlikely to achieve according to traditional indicators of success.

It is interesting to note here that the three solutions that were most often identified to support these children were not seen as effective. Specifically, remediation programs were generally seen as ineffective in raising achievement levels and demoralizing to children and teachers. "Bottom classes" were to be survived, and in an early interview, Kinzelberg mentioned that even focused remediation in the early grades had not resulted in higher achievement scores. Training in English as a second language was seen as useful but in desperately short supply. (Several teachers mentioned a norm of one hour of language training per day for children with no functional language, who spent the remainder of the day in the regular class.) The delivery of support to families was seen as unreliable, uncoordinated and inadequately funded.

Three of the teachers with whom I spoke did not recognize "success for all children" as a goal of SRO or the school, but believed in the idea themselves. One teacher said, "I definitely believe in success for all children because I'm a mother and a grandmother." Another teacher said, "I truly, truly believe that all children can learn. My success indicator is that I look at the level the child was at, and I see progress. I make my expectations clear. I measure success by great grades and improvement in reading and math scores. I ask for 30 percentile points. I'm ecstatic if I get 5 or 10, but I shoot high. I support my expectations with a great deal of innovative types of curriculum and instruction."

This teacher's statements about what she believed in and what she did were certainly confirmed by a spontaneous visit to her class. She was very clear about her expectations. Assignments were written out on the board and reviewed step by step, and good models were displayed and discussed as "exemplary work." Every child was encouraged to do his or her best, and different styles of encouragement could be seen in the way she worked with different children. Children were deeply involved in the curriculum, which on this day highlighted the work the children were doing in social studies, including each child doing research on a famous Black American, writing a report on him or her, and "being" the hero (speaking about the person's life in the first person, complete with costume).

The theme of exploring our American heritage was extended through many direct experiences that integrated curriculum in the fine arts and language arts. The children showed me photographs of the five murals they had developed that were displayed at the Whitney Museum of American Art and sang the song on racial harmony that they had composed for the occasion. Students, teachers, and parents took a field trip to Harlem (which included a trip to

Sylvia's, a well-known restaurant; a conversation with the owner; and a visit to the Studio Museum of Harlem. The children presented information about African traditions to the whole school during Multicultural Day. During my visit, there was a lot of choral speaking and cooperative learning, deep engagement by all 31 children, and many examples of humor and pride in good work that were demonstrated by the teacher and the children.

This teacher sought and got parent involvement in classroom activities and in supporting learning at home. However, her belief in success for all children was so strong that she insisted that even if parents were not involved, children could be successful. A teacher could be a surrogate parent if necessary.

When I asked parents from the Parent Center to define success for all children, the collective reply was that "every child has the chance to achieve a goal. If he's a little slow, you can give him help and get to that goal." All agreed that they didn't like it when kids were labelled, and that if you listen to the kids, they'll tell you what they need. They said that "hotel kids" were not all slow (referring to the homeless children) and that children from the East Side could have their talents too (referring to poor children). They believed that some parents and some teachers did not agree with them, but that most of the teachers in the school believed children could be successful.

Commentary. Certainly one major reason why "Success for All Children" was not a rallying cry at P.S. 111 was because the SRO project staff did not make this goal a condition of involvement or even a very visible issue in the first year of the project. This limitation was recognized at the conclusion of the first year of the project (IRE Staff, Schools Reaching Out: A Report of the First Year, 1989), when "The need to clarify the project's goals for the entire staff," "The need to gain the committed support of the school staff to the project," and "The need to further integrate the project goals with classroom practice" were identified as concerns.

As mentioned briefly in Chapter One, in preparing for the second year of the project, the Project Director decided that agreement to a representative, decision-making council and a plan of action for the year were prerequisites for further project support. Davies met with key New York personnel in June (Kinzelberg, Polanco, Sand (site facilitator), Seeley (National Commission member), Moscow, Alvarado (superintendent) and Lachman (deputy superintendent) and gained this agreement. A draft of the School Planning Council proposal was prepared by Jackson and discussed with Davies, Heleen, Jackson, and Vargas in Boston. Jackson prepared another draft of the "Working Document" which was reviewed by Kinzelberg, Polanco, Vargas, Moscow, and Alvarado and then distributed to the Council in September.

The "School-Community Planning Council Working Document" stated that "The mission of the Schools Reaching Out project is to achieve new levels of academic and social success for all children. A major strategy to achieve this broad goal is the development of stronger linkages among schools, parents, and communities. The "1989-90 Objectives for P.S. 111" were to improve student achievement in the language arts, improve parent teacher conferencing and communicating, increase connections to resources in the community, and expand the volunteer program in classrooms. The Council was responsible for developing and implementing a school improvement plan which "incorporates but is not limited to the Schools Reaching Out mission and objectives." It also had responsibilities for coordinating the Council with other committees and programs, managing the SRO budget, and providing leadership within the school for "school change, the partnership concept, and the SRO objectives and plans." Four working groups were designated (Student Achievement in Language Arts, Parent-Teacher Conferencing, School-Community Connections, and School Volunteers).

After the School-Community Planning Council was established, Davies came to the September and November meetings to provide inspiration and to further clarify SRO's Plan of Action which was distributed to Council members. In the Plan of Action it was reiterated that "The main purpose is to foster the social and academic success of all of the children through developing partnerships between school staff, families, and other agencies and resources in the community. (The project is dedicated to the idea that all children can learn and that children's development is a shared responsibility of school, home and the community.)" In addition, four additional committees were established (Home Activities for Parents and Children, Mini-grant Program, Toy, Game and Book Library, and Committee Integration).

Some tension seemed to remain about the primary purpose of the Council and in fact the thrust of the school, as the November minutes indicate. At that meeting, Kinzelberg clarified that the Language Initiative was the major focus of the school program, and that all of the other committees and activities were seen as extending the Language Initiative. Accordingly, progress on the initiative was fully reported at the fall meetings, and an extensive report of the many exciting classroom applications was delivered to Council members. The purpose of the Council was still not peacefully settled, however, as teachers wanted to use the Council to define and resolve what they considered to be the ongoing, important problems in the school. As already discussed, the January and February meetings caused another shift in direction, and the teachers' and parents' agenda became the focus for spring activities (investigating innovative approaches to reducing class sizes and developing an after-school program; Refer to Chapter One, Section 6 for further information).

The advantage of this controversy over the purpose of the

Council was that teachers, parents, administrators, and community representatives were all discussing school improvement, and each focus served this broad goal. The disadvantage was that commitment to success for all children was never overtly debated; the faculty as a whole was not engaged in the debate; and the sense of urgency about children's unmet needs that might provoke a paradigm shift was not released. Another disadvantage seemed to be a perpetuation of some fuzzy thinking, that is, that work on the language initiative and on supporting success for all children were synonymous.

A real debate over success for all children requires a hard look at sensitive and difficult questions, such as: Who is not succeeding in school? Are racial, gender, ethnic, or economic differences in children a factor? Do we do a better job of teaching some children? Does our curriculum include the history and contributions of African-Americans, Latinos, and Native American Indians (e.g.) in an accurate and non-trivial way? Do the major cultural groups in this school have different approaches to and values about teaching and learning that we are not aware of and therefore ignore in our teaching? Do we need to develop different approaches to teaching the children we are not reaching? How can we look at and deal with our own biases and the limitations of our own teacher preparation programs? What kind of help do we need?

The experience of programs who have agreed to explore these issues (see Chrispeels, 1990; Comer, 1980; Hopfenberg et al., 1990; Moses et al., 1989; Schorr, 1988 reviewed in the final chapter) suggests that they have several factors in common: a sense of crisis or at least deep concern about the effectiveness of urban schools in meeting the academic and social needs of children; commitment to mutual support and good relationships in the school; an ethic of reflective inquiry about curriculum and instruction in a context that is not blaming; time to work on these goals; and a commitment from leaders in the school to shape and guide the culture to support success for all children.

These conditions were not in place during the second year of the project. The SRO leadership was not successful in sparking this debate, but given their two year commitment to the school, the lack of commitment to the concept among the school leaders and most teachers, and the actual conflict between this agenda and the principal's (see next section), a more aggressive insistence on confronting these questions may have resulted in increased individual vulnerability and more focused resistance to educational change. On the other hand, teachers who were eager to take on this challenge and needed the support of colleagues and the administration to maintain their energy and commitment to do so, were probably deeply disappointed at the lost opportunity to begin. It is possible that the experience of negotiation, collaborative problem-solving, curriculum revision, school-parent partnership, acknowledgement and celebration of successes, and public monitoring

of achievement that have begun this year might pave the way for exploring how to achieve success for all children in the future if the tough issues of trust and continued support and training for school personnel can be solved.

Commitment to an Explicitly Defined Mission

As described above, the school community was not explicitly committed to the concept of success for all children. Mr. Kinzelberg was not initially aware that this was the mission of SRO. In my initial interview with Kinzelberg on May 24, 1989, he indicated that his reason for being interested in the project was to extend parent involvement. He said that during the summer he told the superintendent he wanted to involve parents in the school, and three or four days later, the superintendent called him to say, "I've got just the thing!" and told him about the SRO project. Kinzelberg wanted more parent involvement in the school than had occurred in the past because he felt that parent support would be important in bringing additional resources to the school, and that the presence of parents in the school and their support of their children's learning at home would increase children's learning.

IRE's Request for Proposals from the schools identified the goal of the project as "improving school-parent-community relationships" and further stated that "The national project seeks to demonstrate that new kinds of relationships between schools, families, and communities can help to reduce the high levels of social and academic failure of low-income children in urban public schools." A requirement that schools commit to the mission of trying to achieve success for all children was not part of the RFP.

Nonetheless, there is an explicitly defined mission in the school, and that is "To create a unique literate environment that meets the specific needs of our students." This was identified by Kinzelberg as "School Goal Number 1" on February 21, 1989, at a faculty conference and was even more carefully laid out as a school-wide plan in September, 1989. The plan was called "A Teacher's Guide to P.S. 111 Language Initiative" and was distributed to faculty as an administrative initiative that had been revised by teachers on the Council. A six-page document, it outlined teachers' responsibilities in creating a literate environment. Two hours of language activities per day were required. Certain kinds of materials and methods were specified, and daily monitoring of classrooms by the principal and assistant principal were promised. The practice of requiring specific times during the school day for reading aloud (1:00-1:20 p.m.) and sustained silent reading (9:00-9:20 a.m.) were continued from the previous year. Later in the year, the principal asked that bulletin boards and plan books reflect teachers' work on the Language Initiative.

Kinzelberg requested parent support for the Language Initiative in many different ways. As described in the previous chapter, he began the Read Aloud program, spoke at meetings to explain the whole language approach and what parents could do at home to support it, included tips and information about parent support of reading and writing skills in the newsletter, and co-sponsored a celebration breakfast to honor the parent and community volunteers who supported children's learning in school.

I believe the Language Initiative is recognized as the major new direction in the school by parents and teachers. Jennifer Robinson's informal analysis of about a third of her parent survey data (see p. 29) indicated that "improving reading" was the most common response to the question, "What is P.S. 111 doing that is helping your child?" The Language Initiative was initially seen by staff as "Kinzelberg's Language Initiative" because their involvement was mandated, and they were not involved in selecting this direction. However, the principal has asked for input in developing the initiative and has encouraged original directions and innovative projects from staff. Moreover, there is no question that the teachers have used resources and instruction to "take off" in developing new approaches to teaching, and that many exciting processes and products have resulted.

In its current construction, the initiative is perhaps more precisely a change in curriculum and instructional methodology rather than a mission. Next year I would recommend that the Council embed the Language Initiative in a mission, by beginning a conversation to identify clearly the problems which the Language Initiative is designed to solve, evaluating how effective it has been in resolving them, what the limits have been, and seeing what more needs to be done to meet children's individual needs who may not yet be succeeding. If this can be done in a reflective rather than a blaming way, from a position of individual and school strength rather than weakness, then I think a more widespread and deeper sense of ownership of the mission might occur.

Changes in Practice to Support the Mission

There is much evidence of success in changing curriculum practice to support the Language Initiative. Children's writing graced the walls inside and outside of classrooms, and there was a real effort made to tie language arts to children's experiences. Students' reports of their field trips in the collection of children's writing, P.S. 111: Writers on the Move; tales of their wonderful imaginations in The Ultimate How-To Book; and of their field assignments and interviews as reported in the students' newspaper illustrate this point, as does our information about the reading and writing requirements that were components of the fourteen mini-grants. See Chapter One.) Teachers developed wonderful, integrated activities; they made reading aloud and

sustained silent reading part of their programs; and they used an enriched array of materials to support reading and writing across the curriculum. Early childhood teachers using big books and invented spelling, extensive use of novels to enrich the curriculum at the intermediate level; children writing journals, poems, and books, putting on skits and composing songs were all occurring in classrooms last year.

Changes in practice to support the goal of increasing parent and community involvement in the school were summarized in Chapter One. Many of these activities had the additional focus of supporting children's academic and social success.

I believe that some activities developed for the Language Initiative are also supportive of the mission of achieving success for all children. Hopfenberg, Levin et al. (1990) identify changes in curriculum and instruction that contribute to an accelerated curriculum especially designed to support success in urban, minority children. Some of the common elements of the Accelerated Curriculum and P.S. 111's Language Initiative include a language-based curriculum, writing across the curriculum, experiential learning, connection of ideas and application, and an integrated curriculum that places an emphasis on the arts. In the accelerated schools, instructional methods emphasize cooperative learning, peer tutoring, an emphasis on problem-solving and critical thinking, and utilization of parent and community resources. I know that each of these practices was used at P.S. 111, but I am not sure how widely they were applied. As hinted at above, I think that a collaborative, inquiry-based, school wide examination of the results of beginning the Language Initiative might spark a clearer sense of purpose among the faculty and staff, and perhaps create a bridge between the Language Initiative and success for all children.

Training for Participants to Support the Mission

Many supports were offered to teachers to extend their understanding of and ability to implement the whole language approach, such as \$1000 per classroom from School Success money, \$3000 for mini-grants that could be developed in teams, and additional money for publishing children's writing and completing the community portrait. Many opportunities for staff development were offered, including providing each faculty member with Lucy Calkins' book on whole language; providing a workshop to staff on "The Art of Teaching Writing" with the option for follow-up consultation in the classroom; facilitating the participation of teachers, parents, and teacher-parent teams in several workshops outside of school on writing or reading; and having two in-house specialists in language arts available to collaborate with teachers on projects or curriculum.

It is important to note that the resources of SRO were integrated with this mission. Kinzelberg told SRO consultant Martin Brooks on February 2, 1990 that "The whole project is tied into my language initiative. IRE is supporting my efforts. The Council has embellished my Language Initiative. So many good programs are going on here." As an example, SRO's key teacher reports going with five teachers, parents, and community volunteers (more than from any other school) to attend a hands-on workshop to develop language and enrich vocabulary, held at the New School in March, 1990.

Very little training was offered to teachers or parents on home-school partnership issues. As explained in Chapter One, a full-day workshop on parent-teacher communication was run by SRO staff during the first year of the project for an invited group of teachers and parents. The focus was on getting to know each other, learning about wishes each had for their child or classroom, identifying obstacles to fulfilling the wish, and brainstorming together how those wishes might be fulfilled. Another kind of training occurred when Barbara Jackson and members of the SRO staff facilitated group work at Council meetings. They were modeling ways of supporting small group work, encouraging open discussion, and making consensus-based decisions, but they were not explicitly offering training to participants. Barbara Jackson offered additional consultation to Kinzelberg at his request. To my knowledge, the key teacher did not initiate or design activities for faculty during the second year of the project.

Support for Experimentation

Support from the Central Administration for Experimentation. District 2's Superintendent, Anthony Alvarado has been very supportive of the project. He met with Davies to identify a school site, spoke with him at regular intervals for updates on the project, intervened to support the change in direction that Davies felt was essential at the beginning of Year 2, and came to the September meeting of the Council. The focus of his remarks in September was commending the staff and school for working together so that all children will learn and for creating a council so that decisions could be made at the school level. According to Council minutes, "He urged all involved to set expectations high -- to become excellent, not just good 'given the students attending.'" A July 18, 1988 article in The New York Times described him as "a man of bold ideas and bold moves." He emphasizes a whole language approach, parent and community involvement in schools, and school-based management.

Jon Moscow is a paid staff member from District 2 who has been a member of the Council. According to an interview in May 1989, he saw parents as the source of educational change and innovation and strongly supported the notion of success for all children and a collective vision to support it. He believes that a fundamental

restructuring of schools is necessary to confront educational failure and racial and ethnic prejudice.

In this case, central administration was more eager to see experimentation and restructuring than personnel at the school. Alvarado and Moscow had a common vision that complemented Davies' vision, and were eager to offer resources and support to help parents, teachers, and the school administration achieve it.

Kinzelberg did not always find the emphasis on vision to be helpful. In a moment of frustration at the end of the first year of the project, he asked for more help from IRE to specify what **would** work in the school. He felt that the IRE staff had access to research across the country about model practices in urban settings to support parent involvement and school improvement, and that they were not sharing the information with him in useable ways. To paraphrase our conversation, I think his image was that IRE would identify and carry out a model parent involvement program in the school by specifying what should be done, offering help, and training the key teacher to carry it out. The notion that he had to develop a vision and exert leadership to achieve it was not part of his understanding. The lack of positive feedback from IRE and the direct and sympathetic connection between IRE and District 2's central administration were understandably seen as threatening.

Support of the School Administration for Experimentation. Kinzelberg was very eager to support experimentation that furthered the Language Initiative. He sought opportunities to share this information with others, publicly recognized interesting efforts, and encouraged others to document their experiences. Although initially hesitant about the Council, he recognized its helpfulness in organizing and supporting his initiatives. Moreover, he encouraged Council involvement in areas such as budget allocation and selection of new faculty and promised support for Council action on an after-school program and efforts to explore innovative approaches to decreasing class size.

I think there is still work to be done on creating a climate in the school in which experimentation to meet individual and professional goals is welcomed. As in most schools, teachers are reluctant to admit difficulties or question administrative directives when the educational leader is also responsible for evaluating their performance. Both principals function primarily as authority figures in relation to teachers, but honest attempts to try out a more collaborative mode were initiated in the second part of the year at the Council. Based on my interviews and admittedly limited information, I would say that most teachers do not yet seem to feel confident of the principals' support of them as individuals, nor do the principals seem fully confident of teacher support.

During most of the year, I saw little evidence of easy,

positive relationships or a culture of "building on strengths" at the school that might encourage risk-taking. My interviews confirm that anger, factionalism, dislike and/or distrust of others in the community is not uncommon. However, some positive signs are emerging. A retirement party for Janet Albstein and Howard Weitzer, teachers who had been at the school more than 25 years, attracted almost 80 parents, teachers, and administrators for an evening of skits, humor, and songs; an informal reading club for teachers has been established; the teacher research team has enjoyed meeting together regularly over lunch; and working committees have had successful experiences in planning the Multicultural Celebration, in initiating an after-school program, and in making recommendations for changes in school staffing (See below.).

Support of the Community for Experimentation. Parents and community members have taken advantage of invitations to become involved in supporting children and the school, as documented in Chapter One. On the basis of a quick read-through of the parent survey data, Jennifer Robinson's impression is that most parents feel the school is doing a good job with their children and feel positively about the principal. Many parents indicated that they read aloud to their children every day, and not many parents offered suggestions on the question about what else would make P.S. 111 a better school. The primary way in which parents wanted to be more involved in the school was to be in closer contact with their children's teachers. At least in this impressionistic view, then, parents polled in May 1990 seemed satisfied with and supportive of the school's efforts. As documented in Chapter One, firms and foundations in the city have been very responsive to requests for resources, and I think more fully committed partnerships are possible in the future.

Transformation of Existing Structures

There were several changes in traditional organizations and activities as a result of SRO. These included:

1. A larger room for the Parent Center with easy access to the entrance of the school that was sufficiently distant from classrooms to ensure privacy;
2. Identification of a coordinator of parent activities with release time from teaching and responsibility for planning volunteer activities and parent education activities;
3. The development of a 22 member School and Community Planning Council with responsibility for school improvement and budget allocation and a collaborative committee structure to implement its action plans;
4. The financing of mini-grants which brought teachers and parents

together to support classroom curriculum;

5. The initiation of a school volunteer program
6. The initiation of a parent education and support program;
7. The establishment of a toybrary;
8. The hiring and training of outreach workers;
9. The development of a teacher research team.

A note on the Council as a structural transformation: the creation of the Council was a major departure from the culture of the school and a very important opportunity to focus regularly on home-school-community partnerships and school improvement. Despite everyone's fears and reservations, attendance was regular, individuals worked hard to accomplish the goals identified within and outside of the council, and there were genuine efforts to begin to learn the new attitudes and behaviors that collaborative decision making required. The importance of these accomplishments should not be underestimated.

After support from SRO ends, two of these transformations will definitely continue: the Parent Center and the Council, though the Council may have a different size and membership. Parents and teachers agreed to continue the Council next year, but school personnel did not agree to structure the Council according to Chancellor Fernandez' new guidelines. Under the Chancellor's plan, New York City schools could choose to begin work toward school-based management with a \$7500 plus \$7 per pupil planning grant, if agreement to do so was reached by teachers and parents. By a narrow margin, teachers voted against adopting this model of school-based management at this juncture. (Parents, however, agreed.)

Don Davies, Barbara Jackson, and David Seeley are seeking funds from the Diamond Foundation to extend experimentation with the parent center, outreach program, and teacher research team. This seems a very promising direction.

In terms of the fate of the other structures listed above, I offer some recommendations. My experience suggests that coordination is needed to keep parent activities alive, and that access to a telephone and time to use it during the school day are necessities for someone in this role. This would be an important priority for continuing to attract new and not-yet-involved parents to the school. In addition, keeping in mind the sequential model of parent involvement, the primary thrust for next year should be for parents, teachers, and administrators to develop common goals and work together to fulfill them. Opportunities for this might occur not only in the Council, but also on a joint board to plan

the continuation of the mini-grants or even to plan inservice activities for parents, teachers, and parents and teachers together.

It is also interesting to consider what structures did not get established to support this change effort. There was no change in schedule to support more frequent meetings of the whole staff or regular meetings of parents and teachers beyond the Council. The optional parent-teacher conferences were not carefully considered. A tradition of evening or weekend scheduling to accommodate working parents was not initiated for parent activities. There was no staff support team established (as in Comer's projects) to provide consultation and assistance to teachers about individual children, though it seemed possible that the Pupil Personnel Committee that meets once a week might become a vehicle for consultation and support. There are good reasons why these changes did not occur, but they may be food for thought for the future.

Continuous Evaluation of Practice

Because schools are so devoted to providing direct service to children, a habit of mind of stepping back to evaluate what one is doing and might do is uncommon. However, schools that are committed to achieving success for all children **have** incorporated this kind of self study into their culture, partly in recognition of the difficulty of their task, and partly in recognition of the value and strength of their collaboration in trying to move forward.

One method of evaluating the success of the language initiative and the SRO project is to examine children's achievement scores. There is already evidence that improvement in the school's achievement data is correlated with the pursuit of the language initiative. Here is what principal Kinzelberg has pointed out to parents and staff with pride:

1. In the area of writing, 94.3% of the 1988-89 fifth graders scored at or above the New York State reference point.
2. Based on tests taken by students (Degree of Reading Proficiency) in May 1989, the number of children reading at or above grade level increased by 12.5% over the previous year's scores, the highest percentage increase in District 2.
3. These reading scores raised the school's overall ranking in New York City from 488th (in 1987) 415th (in 1988) to 326th (in 1989) among 619 schools.

To set the reading achievement scores in a broader context, the new figure indicates that 45.8% of the children are now reading at or above grade level. According to statistics summarized by the New York City Board of Education and distributed in Fall 1989, the percent at or above the 50th percentile was 70.1% in 1985-86; 58.9

% in 1986-87; 69.2% in 1987-88 as calculated by old norms and 35.9% as calculated by new norms; and 49.1% in 1988-89 according to new norms. These figures do not include special education or limited English proficiency students or children below grade 2. Grade 2 children are tested with the Metropolitan Achievement Test, and the percent scoring at or above the 50th percentile was actually down from the preceding year, from 39.2 to 32.5%. For children in grades 3-6, 23% of them are in the lowest quartile; over half of the second graders were in the lowest quartile last year. It is clear that although steady progress is generally occurring, much more work remains to be done. One goal -- simple to state, difficult to achieve -- might be for all students to test at or above grade level.

Scores in mathematics testing have generally been going up. In 1988-89, 61.3% of the students were at or above the 50th percentile on the Metropolitan Achievement Test in grades 2-6. In 1987-88, the figure was 50%; in 1986-87, 50.9%; in 1985-86, 54.7%. From 1987-88 to 1988-89, there was one very interesting change: the students moving from fourth to fifth grade (94% of the same students a year later) went up 33.1% (from 41.4% to 74.5%) in one year.

Scores are not yet available for the 1989-90 school year. Hopefully these scores will reflect the enormous energy and hard work that has gone into the language initiative this year.

Schools involved in success for all children seem to use test scores in several ways. Progress of individual children is noted, and children's difficulties in particular types of questions or subject areas are explored. These data are fed into explorations of whether action should be taken and what might be done.

Other criteria of progress are also examined: increases in parent attendance at school, increases in student attendance, students' performance on criterion-referenced tests, and other criteria that are related to the goals of particular schools. The notion that these kinds of data are important components in the identification of school goals is another "transformational" notion.

Another aspect of continuous evaluation of practice is to note (and celebrate) not only the accomplishments of collaborative work, but also the problems that emerge. The accomplishments of the initiatives at P.S. 111 have been documented throughout this report, but there are also some downsides of transformation that need to be examined. Several teachers expressed exhaustion from the pressure they were feeling to respond to all the administrative directives. One teacher said, "So many thrusts!". She mentioned writing, math, whole language initiatives, science projects, contests, peer tutoring, enrichment activities, and said: "Which thrust are we dealing with here?"... "By 12 I'm so razzled and

rattled that I'm crazy -- and I'm organized!" Teachers objected to not being recognized for their hard work ("I've never once been recognized since I've been here."), feeling used, and being required to highlight language initiatives on their lesson plans and conform to school-wide reading times regardless of their individual needs. One teacher said in an interview with researcher Martin Brooks, "The emphasis is on products, not on relationships." Several teachers, including some very talented teachers, have asked for transfers for next year. It is meaningful that these concerns have been identified: it is also important to deal with them sympathetically, to recognize their validity, and to respond with specific solutions, such as setting top priorities, supporting more flexibility in classroom adaptations of the Language Initiative, and looking for ways to recognize teachers whose contributions may not be as apparent.

I was interested to see that a principal highlighted in The Boston Globe last week as a "hero of education" said that a survey of his teachers found morale to be poor to low. Change and pressure to perform, even in a positive direction, cause stress in all of us. At P.S. 111, many important changes in practice have occurred; there have been many exciting accomplishments; and there is energy and pressure to continue these changes. In this context it is also important to realize that several teachers have some deep concerns about whether they are safe, respected, appreciated, and listened to at P.S. 111. Success breeds success, and if scores continue to rise and recognition increases, it may be easier to negotiate and appreciate one another. Change occurs in cycles of movement and consolidation and a look at these realities is important. Ideally, it is time to consider a time frame of several years to develop and reach goals in partnership.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Ellis School and Home-School Partnership

At the Ellis School, a major focus of the project was providing support for families, particularly those who were not closely connected to the school. During the first year, several innovative programs and activities were designed that enhanced parent-teacher communication and began to lay the groundwork for parent involvement in decision making. During Year Two, the focus shifted to parent and teacher empowerment, and some steps were taken toward home-school partnership. These conclusions will be explained in this chapter.

Parent Involvement Activities

1. Support for Families

The Parent Center. The creation of the Parent Center offered opportunities for parents to talk with each other and to receive information and resources. The Center was primarily staffed by Tammarrah Lee (an Ellis teacher), Aida Beltran (a parent) and Jennifer Page (an IRE staff member) during the first year, and by Anne White (a parent) and Aida Beltran in the second year. Throughout the life of the project, providing support to families was a priority for the Center.

During the first year of the project, Lee worked with children and families in crisis, providing support by telephone and at the Center for both children and families. She provided crisis counseling for children who were removed from the classroom; and she offered parents counseling, connections to school personnel, and referrals to agencies. During the second year, the support to families was further extended. Families were given guidance in seeking shelter, dealing with abuse, negotiating with welfare and housing agencies, finding summer programs for their children, connecting to school personnel, and thinking through problems their children were having at school. Even more direct support was given at times by supplying food or clothing to families needing them. When she was available, Aida Beltran extended these services to parents who spoke Spanish but not English. Materials were translated into Spanish and distributed; connections to families were made over the telephone; and Beltran would accompany parents with limited English proficiency to city agencies.

In an interview with IRE researcher Jean Krasnow, White offered further clarification about some of the requests she and Beltran received during the second year of the Parent Center:

"It's really busy around 12-1. Many calls come in. At first, parents called in about housing. They don't start to call until noon. Section 8 housing questions. Aida goes to welfare offices, anywhere to be a translator. There are many housing questions that Aida handles as well. Sometimes we are out to 5 o'clock going to these offices with parents who have called for help. Some call and say, 'Help me to find a place to live. I am tired of living in a shelter.' That really touches me. It's about young babies. It's very critical. Sometimes they call about food: how to get it, sometimes late on rent, where to go for assistance. I did some of this work as an outreach worker in Ohio...I am learning this job as it goes along. One grandmother called. She is doubled over with arthritis and asked if we could find someone to walk her grandson home from kindergarten. She usually does it, but couldn't get out that day.

The Parent Center was also helpful in stimulating informal conversation, sharing, and problem-solving. Parents could drop by for a cup of coffee and some friendly conversation beginning at 9 in the morning; and comfortable furniture, large windows, and a toy corner for young children made the Center an inviting location. Teachers would also drop by for a cup of coffee or to use the telephone. They might stop for a few minutes to exchange information, make a request, look at the materials for parents and about parent programs that were on hand, or have a friendly, quick conversation with the coordinators, IRE staff, or visiting parents.

There are no clear records of how many parents were served in these ways, but there are indications that the numbers were not trivial. For example, a January report from Lee documented that she had: "established contact with two parents whose children have been 'acting out' in school. I provided them with information and agency contacts re: children's support groups; after school programs and counseling services." White reported helping five families with housing concerns during the first week of school. The Parent Center did seem to function as a locus for informal support for a large group of parents; yet parents did not come just to "hang out," as was the case in New York. Parents seemed to come or call with specific needs or to attend particular activities that were occurring at the Center, and then to stay on for a while to chat or problem-solve if they cared to.

Courses for Parents. English as a Second Language courses were offered to parents in both years of the project. During the first year, seven parents participated and during the second year, 15-18

parents attended class twice a week. During the second year, a GED course was offered to 7 parents twice a week. Workshops during the first year included: an evening workshop "Understanding the Needs of Your Child," another on using recycled materials, a program on "Educating Children for Success," and programs on gifted education and special education. These were not well attended (1-10 parents per session). No workshops were offered during Year 2.

Activities. During the second year, a parent mentioned the idea of having a Halloween party at the school, so that the children could have a safe and enjoyable evening. The principal agreed, and parent volunteers decorated the school and organized the party. Parent Center coordinators and volunteers often helped to plan social events that supported families. For example, in the first year of the project, parents brought food for the Fall Open House and the Christmas party.

The Parent Center organized a school store which was open two days a week at lunch time, where children could purchase pencils, notebooks, and other supplies. Parents found this a service because when their children shopped at local establishments, they apparently often came home with the wrong change. Another service to parents was a clothing exchange run by parents in the Parent Center.

Last year, the key teacher (Lee) organized a basketball program and a cheerleading team to address the lack of any organized physical education program in the school and to promote contact with parents through practices and games. Another parent project sparked by the key teacher was to seek funding from the city to improve the park adjoining the school. The proposal, which involved collaboration with community organizations and agencies (The Habitat, the Afro-American Museum, Wheelock College) was awarded \$2000.

Parent Outreach Workers. A very effective and important innovation for parent support was the program developed under the leadership of Vivian Johnson of IRE to reach out to parents who had not previously been involved at the school. In a telephone survey completed by Sue Ellen Hurley-Hogan in Spring 1989, 28 parents said they would be interested in receiving visits in their home from home visitors who would be "other Ellis School parents," who "would share ideas with you about raising children, and would lend you toys and books." In the fall of Year Two, 12 families whose interest persisted and who had not previously been extensively involved at school were targeted for inclusion in the program. Over the course of the year, other parents were added to the program who were referred by the "first generation" of parents or by teachers in the school. Each of the four workers saw five parents regularly for a total of 20.

The Parent Support Workers were recruited from the

neighborhood. All are parents; two currently have children in the school; two are Latino and two are African-American. All had extensive professional experience in counseling, social work, or education, and they are warm, generous, wise women.

The Parent Support workers offer friendship; support for parenting concerns; information, modeling, and feedback about how parents can support their children's learning at home; referral information about (e.g.), finding improved housing, medical care, or summer program information; and greater connection to the school through information about school activities, hints about communicating with teachers, and support for getting more involved at school.

The program philosophy is one of parent support and empowerment and is reminiscent of Cochran's (1987) Family Matters program developed in Syracuse, New York. The particular focus of the visits is determined by the parents who are being visited. As one outreach worker, Leona Williams said, "Parents call the shots and set the tone. We give them the recognition that they have the ability to do that. You can't just go in and say, 'Work on Math!' It wouldn't work."

To give a richer understanding of some of the connections that the Parent Support Workers have made, here are some samples from my interviews with them:

- One parent had a request for stories that could be read at home. Modesta Santa explained that this mother didn't speak English, so she came every day, and suggested that the two children (nine and seven) read to each other. They do read to each other; the younger child reads to the older one ten minutes a day, and they both like it.

- Leona Williams explained that: "Parents set the type of skills they want to work on." She gave several examples of how a mother might already be working with a child on a learning task, but might need some suggestions about how to work with the child a little more effectively. For example, a problem might be timing. One mother was trying to work on flash cards with her child, but the baby kept interfering. She continued the task for about an hour. Williams suggested she limit the session to about 15-20 minutes, and do it at a time when the baby was asleep so they would not be interrupted.

Or she might model a strategy for a parent. One mother was having difficulty

telling her child when she was too busy to work with her. Williams said: "I told her she could say: 'This is not a good time for me.' We tried it out then and there.

In another situation, a mother was trying to teach her child all the letters at once. Williams suggested she focus on picking out the small a and big A. She added that she might tell a mother that: "Lots of times children don't want to verbalize. I told her that children can also show they know by pointing, and she could use memory games."

- Williams explained how she sometimes helps parents communicate more effectively with teachers. She said that a mother will tell her that she goes to a conference and the teacher will say that "Everything is fine." The mother will have concerns about her child, but not know what to say. Williams said: "I tell them to say what they are concerned about. Ask the teacher specifics, like: 'Have you recognized this?..'

- Williams mentioned helping parents who were worried about their children's safety: "There are issues of safety. A parent wants to move on and away. I help them find different housing possibilities."

- Mina Porter mentioned that: "Most of my parents are 'graduating.' They're already doing everything I see that needs to be done, and the children are doing well. I visit them once a month." She gave some examples of how parents had learned from the program to seek resources themselves.

She mentioned that one parent had gone on her own and found activities for summer camp. Porter had gotten a library card for a child and his family, and now they were going to the library as a family and really enjoying it.

Another positive aspect of the program was that at year's end, the Parent Support workers were communicating more with teachers. Teachers were referring parents; the outreach workers were asking teachers about tutorial work that might be helpful; teachers were recommending particular materials; and the Parent Support Workers were encouraging parents and teachers to communicate directly. The Parent Center hosted a get-together of the Support Workers and teachers to share goals and methods, and about eight teachers came,

representing each grade level and the special education classes. This form of outreach came late in the year, however, because the Support team wanted to make sure that the parents were the ones who requested support and defined the agenda of their sessions.

Summer Program and Continuation of Support for Families. With the guidance of Vivan Johnson and Leigh Ann Orr, a graduate student at Boston University, parents have held three brainstorming sessions to help identify their hopes for parent activities in the future. In the planning sessions, parents (about ten volunteers per session, including African-American, Hispanic, and Haitian parents) expressed hopes for several extensions of the current program: workshops based on their interests (calligraphy, gymnastics, cooking, sewing), a mothers' support group where they could share resources and help each other, a parent-to-parent newsletter, a plan to help each other out with babysitting if a child or mother is sick, and multicultural events, where they could celebrate their culture and heritage with others. Parents hoped that there would be a welcoming activity at the beginning of next year to welcome new parents to the school. One immediate outcome was a commitment to a summer program of field trips. Parents and children and Orr are currently visiting all parts of the city once a week on inexpensive excursions.

At this time, principal Carlos Gibb is seeking funding to continue the Family Support program. No source of funding has been identified to maintain the Parent Center or the Parent Center coordinator(s). Of equal concern, the District has told the school that the Parent Center needs to be used as a bilingual kindergarten. The principal said that he would attempt to locate space in the building for a Parent Center, but that its location could not be determined until next year.

Commentary. IRE and the Ellis have been most fortunate in acquiring the services of the parent coordinators and parent support workers. Their professional background and knowledge of the community have made them effective in identifying and accessing appropriate resources and agency connections for families. These women have not only provided example after example of support to families who would not have otherwise been connected to the school, but they have also managed to create a linking network for families to agencies that both Hobbs (1984) and Kagan (1989) describe as the goal of school-community support for families. In addition, these services have consistently been provided in a context of empowering parents to acquire skills themselves. Parents' strengths are respected; diplomatic suggestions are made; dependence is avoided; friendly contact is maintained. Aida Beltran communicates the essence of her experience with parent empowerment in this interview with Jean Krasnow:

I would like the Parents' Center to stay here.
You have something that the parents can look

forward to going into, not only to solve a problem with the kids, but somewhere they can go to relax, to find out about what's really happening in the school. Not only by going to the principal in the school or a teacher who is going to say your kid is bad, but a place of their own. I think parents to parent can help each other more because we are going through the experiences or we have already lived that problem. And they could learn from us, and we could learn a lot from them.

There is no question that the addition of an assistant coordinator and two Parent Support Workers who speak Spanish has extended the outreach of the school to Latino parents with limited English fluency. About 35% of the Ellis parents are Hispanic. In Hurley-Hogan's survey, only half of them spoke English. Beltran said that Latino parents are "very much improved" in participating in the school in terms of "getting to talk to other parents or the parents to talk to the teachers....And I have a lot of phone calls from the parents just letting me know, 'Oh, I'm so happy you speak Spanish, Once they know I speak Spanish, it's like, "Oh, what a relief!" Since Carlos Gibb (the new principal) also speaks Spanish, it is now easier for the coordinators and support workers to create a bridge for parents whose limited facility in English has made them reluctant to contact the school.

As another dimension, Beltran finds that providing courses for parents is a critical contribution of the project, and that the ESL parents are so happy to be learning English. She said:

"I know what they feel. I never leave (my house to go to an office or agency) without saying, 'Thank God, I can speak English. Where would I be without the English?' It's about self-esteem. I can say what I want. Before, never for myself..never dared to speak up for myself. But now I know that if they say yes or no, I know I won't break. Now I know how to speak for myself. When you can use your own words, you can show your feelings, make people feel it."

The Parent Center has been a place where parents have found a room of their own and have begun to find their own voice. They have made a powerful beginning. The connection of parent empowerment to children's success has not yet been systematically evaluated. One parent reports that her child is now ready to move out of the bilingual class; another parent reports an increase in her child's self-esteem; a third explains that her child is reading at home more. I think it would certainly be possible to extend and expand this model and to evaluate systematically the nature of the

support worker's interventions, the mothers' responses, the teachers' observations, and children's academic progress over time.

2. Home-School Communication

Parent Survey. Hurley-Hogan conducted a survey of 80 parents (one in five from the school) during the 1988-89 academic year as part of her dissertation research. Demographic information was obtained about the parents (e.g., race, length at present address, number of children), as well as: information about the ways in which they had been involved at the school, barriers to involvement, ways they would like to be involved, evaluation of various aspects of the school, priorities for their child, what was important to them in their role as parents, recommendations about what would make Ellis a better school for their child, and anything else they wanted to add. The information from this survey is very rich. Most of the parents surveyed had been reasonably active in the school, with 40-50% of each racial group visiting the school from 1-3 times during the year, and 37% of the black parents, 54% of the Hispanic parents, and 60% of the white parents making four or more visits to the school during the year. Overall, parents were positive about the education of their children, the friendliness of teachers and principal, and their own involvement in the school.

Information about ways in which parents would like to be further involved was used in selecting parents for the Parent Support program. To my knowledge, other data from the survey was not used in developing program activities during 1989-90.

Visiting Week. Last year there were two innovative activities developed for welcoming parents to school. Parents were invited to the school during a designated week in April, when they were welcomed to visit the classroom to meet teachers and experience first-hand the activities that occurred during the school day. Approximately 150 parents came to the school, some staying for 20 minutes, some for the whole day. The event was not repeated this year. A second idea was a welcome letter.

Telephone Chain and Welcome Letter. Last year SRC's Executive Planning Council initiated two ideas in this category: a classroom-based telephone chain that would connect parents to each other and to important information coming from teachers, and a welcome letter from teachers to each parent. The telephone chain ran into some problems (parental sensitivity about giving out and publishing telephone numbers and non-English speaking parents), but a network of 130 parents was initiated and used in April. The chain was apparently a very important tool for encouraging terrific attendance at the Multicultural Potluck Dinner (about 200 total attendance; 100 parents). This innovation was not continued this year.

The introductory letter was suggested by a parent on the Council, who discussed it with teachers at the Faculty Senate, and then worked with teachers to draft a prototype letter. Sharon Beck, the computer specialist, put the prototype on disc so that each teacher could modify the letter as needed. Although individual teachers sent home letters to parents at the beginning of the year, I am not aware that this idea was implemented by teachers throughout the school in September.

Kindergarten and First-Grade Dinner. The kindergarten and first-grade teachers organized a dinner for parents of these children, focusing on what parents could do to support their children's education. Approximately 60 parents and eleven teachers attended. The event was not repeated this year.

Breakfasts. This year, Jennifer Page and Jean Krasnow of the IRE staff initiated the idea of bringing parents to school for breakfast. They hoped the breakfasts would accomplish several objectives: parents would meet with their children's teachers and the principal, learn a little about the school curriculum, share with each other about what they did to support their child's learning at home, meet other parents, and express ideas or concerns they might have. As explained by Krasnow, the teachers were not supportive of the idea, but they (Page and Krasnow) would not let it go. Beginning with the kindergarten teachers, invitations were sent from the principal and the teachers in Spanish and English. Eventually, all but one teacher participated; breakfasts were held at each grade level in the Parents' Center, and additional breakfasts were held for fathers and for parents of children with special needs.

Krasnow estimates that 126 parents, representing about 35% of the families, participated in these breakfasts. They attracted some parents who had not been to the school before. For example, one Filipino parent who had never been to the building followed the school bus to find her way, and then stayed after the program to help clean up. The programs began at 9:15 and lasted for about an hour. An initial greeting from principal Gibb was followed by a welcome by the teachers, some information about the classroom, a welcome by the coordinators, and then sharing and conversation. Most teachers anticipated that the breakfasts would be awkward or tense, and felt apprehensive about "facing" parents. (In one case, preserved on videotape, their concerns seemed realistic, as one family dominated the fifth grade meeting with challenging questions and comments, and one member of the family fainted!) But generally, the occasions were friendly, slightly formal, brief opportunities for families to make connections with educators and other parents.

Almost 30 fathers, uncles, grandfathers, or other significant male (and female) relatives and friends came to the Fathers' Breakfast, including the principal, assistant principal, and the

area superintendent. A very rich discussion of their own experiences with their fathers occurred as well as repeated reinforcement of the importance of spending time with one's children. The parents of children with special needs found their sharing so valuable, they planned to get together again.

It is interesting that a dominant theme during the "concerns" segment was a wish for more communication from school. Parents whose children's teachers sent regular notes or newsletters home were appreciated; other parents wished for more regular and dependable communication so they could understand the teacher's expectations and intervene before a problem or crisis was underway. Other common concerns were requests for additional programs for the children (gym, music, counseling), and worries about safety on the playground.

Study Seminars for Parents and Teachers. During the second year of the project, IRE scheduled two seminars for teachers and parents on parent involvement. The seminars were two hours each. They were held at a conference room in a local restaurant. Each participant was expected to read three articles on parent involvement before the meeting and were paid \$50 each. Don Davies led the sessions, which prompted very interesting discussions about the responsibilities of schools for comprehensive parent support, the role of teachers in reaching out to parents, the role of parents in supporting the school, and basically who had what responsibility and what power.

Teachers and parents both shared concerns (communication break-downs, a child who is not succeeding, teachers feeling defensive, parents feeling unwelcomed), but the discussion did not feel personal. By basing the discussion on articles describing parent involvement in other sites, it became possible to talk quite non-defensively about what aspects of these ideas seemed desirable and undesirable at the Ellis. On the other hand, there was some discouragement when parents and teachers considered why home and school were often "worlds apart," and one teacher worried that "When you (IRE) are gone, teachers will be going right back to the classrooms and close the door." Evaluation sheets filled out after the meeting documented that all participants were glad they had participated and would attend another seminar. Some mentioned appreciating the honesty of the exchange, the suggestions made for solving the problems at hand, and the opportunity for parents and teachers to discuss these issues together. Two comments are especially relevant to home-school communication. A teacher wrote: "I think these seminars are important in bridging the gaps between teachers and parents;" and a parent commented: "The discussion helped me understand teachers and how to better communicate with them."

Newsletters. The principal began the year by sending newsletters home, but ended the practice after two or three.

Krasnow's research group made a commitment to maintain regular communication with parents. For example, teacher Nora Toney informed parents about field trips, how they fit into the curriculum, and requested their help as volunteers. Ruth Williams wrote a monthly newsletter to parents explaining the kindergarten curriculum, and Yasmina Rhodes sent letters home explaining discipline policies, grading, and easy trips to take with children. One teacher sent a weekly note home with each child, explaining the child's progress and including the child's quiz scores and grades. Although the concept of regular communication with parents did not catch on throughout the school, the teacher research team persisted in the practice and saw its value.

Minigrants. The mini-grants at the Ellis, as at P.S. 111, became an important vehicle for sharing information about children's classroom curriculum with parents. The minigrants will be more fully described in section on Home Learning.

Social Activities. During the second year, a multi-cultural potluck dinner was held on October 1 as a welcome-back-to-school event. Parents were invited to bring an ethnic casserole and had an opportunity to meet new and continuing staff. This activity provided an informal opportunity for parents and staff to get to know each other and the good food sent a message of mutual caring.

Commentary. Several interesting and successful projects were begun last year to communicate with parents that were not continued this year. Although there was individual leadership to increase communication to parents from the Teacher Research team working with Krasnow this year, there was not a school-based policy that supported frequent communication. During his first year, Gibb was supportive of IRE efforts to increase communication with families, but he did not take a consistent, active role in promoting or modeling more extended communication himself, nor did school-based leadership in this area emerge from any other source.

3. Parent Support for the School.

Parent Support in the School. In the May meeting of the Executive Council, Florence Hadley, the principal during the first year of the project, said that "Parents **are** in the school. That's true. It's nothing for me to look up and see a **line** of parents, and I hear: 'Honey, is there anything I can do here?' Parents feel more at ease coming into the building. Teachers feel more at ease having them come in the building." During the first year of the project, parents were involved at school, especially after January.

For example, parents attending the January 5 meeting of the School Parent Council (PTA) expressed concern that no celebration was planned for the Puerto Rican holiday "Three Kings Day." The Council agreed that this was a problem. Aida Beltran subsequently wrote a script for a program and asked two of the bilingual

teachers to cooperate in producing it. With the willing involvement and contributions of the teachers and their children, and the help of two other parents, costumes were produced and the program was offered to the whole school on January 7, in Spanish.

As a second example, the Bilingual Fair on May 11 (which presented crafts, food, and display tables for the school community) was organized by the bilingual teachers and their classes, and relied on 40 Hispanic parents who cooked Hispanic food for all the children in the school to sample. The Executive Planning Council parents and the School Parent Council leaders planned and organized the Multicultural Dinner on May 24, which invited families for a very successful pot-luck dinner and entertainment (poetry in Spanish and English, Spanish dancing for all to join). Parents were involved on Councils (see below), on the Park Committee, on the Logo committee, and several other activities.

During the second year of the project, the coordinators of the Parents' Center did a great deal of support work for the school. They and other parent volunteers whom they recruited spent many hours addressing envelopes, photocopying for teachers, making telephone calls to follow up on children who did not make it to school; helping with decorations and food when needed for a meeting; planning holiday parties at the Center; holding a teacher appreciation luncheon for the teachers, making calls to parents to attend the breakfasts. Parents helped with teacher-initiated activities such as the Christmas bazaar, the library book drive, the stop and shop fund raiser, and the annual candy sale.

As Anne White explained, she tried to fill any request and "welcomed anybody who came through that door." Sometimes this meant cleaning the cafeteria or providing food for events that were not related to the Parent Center. There was little recognition or appreciation from administration for these services, but the IRE staff was very attuned to their contributions and consistently admiring. In her final report, Johnson reports that "Teachers appreciated parental assistance in all of the activities noted above and since that worked so well some teachers asked parents to continue volunteering in classroom activities and collaborative relationships were thus expanded" (1990b, p. 10).

Classroom Volunteers. Eileen de Jesus, a bilingual teacher who unfortunately left the school after the first year, was very committed to including parents in her classroom and involving them at home to support children's learning. For example, she explained to one mother how she was doing math problem-solving in school. The mother wanted to help, so De Jesus taught the mother to do the problems. Then at home, she and her son worked on two pages together, and he would do the third page independently. Three fathers stopped by the classroom periodically. She taught one how to do multiplication, and "now this kid is multiplying." Two

parents sat in on English lessons with their children. De Jesus reported developing strong connections with nine of 18 parents, and emphasized that she saw "an awful lot of improvement in my classroom." She said that "Almost every one of my children has improved this year," and said that she was targeting five children for honor roll next semester (compared with two last semester). She said, "Believe it or not, parents hug me and kiss me and come and sit down and talk!" Moreover, leadership from this teacher enabled parents of bilingual children to become more integrated into the whole school in ways that respected their heritage, as in the Three Kings celebration, the International dinner, and the Bilingual Fair mentioned above.

During the second year, some parents came to work with children in the classroom, though White found the task of recruiting parent volunteers more difficult than she had anticipated. She worked very hard and persistently to involve more parents in the life of the schools. For example, at the beginning of the year, she consistently greeted parents as they dropped off and picked up their children, introduced herself, and solicited their involvement in the Center. She made many, many calls to parents and got commitments from them to come to school, but generally few followed through. During the school's fall open house, White and Beltran greeted parents, provided refreshments and handouts on educational activities, and explained how they might become involved in the Center.

Unlike New York, there was no consistent training program for parents who might have felt the need for support as volunteers, and the parents' work schedules were probably barriers. In Hurley-Hogan's (1989) survey of 80 parents selected to reflect the proportionate membership of each racial group present in the school, 38% worked at night and 67% worked during the day. Some parents worked two jobs; some worked and attended school; 62% said that their work schedule kept them from doing more in the school. Other barriers were lack of transportation, young children at home, and for the Hispanic mothers in the sample, English skills, since 50% did not speak English. Another barrier may have been a lack of clear support from teachers and administrators for volunteering, since the presence of parents in the classroom was not yet seen as consistently positive by school personnel (see Chapter Five). It is interesting that teachers continue to be interested in parent volunteers. In a meeting of four teachers to discuss possible activities for the 1990-1991 academic year, they requested training activities to assist them in working with parent volunteers and to assist parents in volunteering.

Commentary. By the end of the first year of the project, there were several models that had been developed for involving parents in classrooms and in planning school-based activities. This year, parent involvement in the classroom did not increase. The model of parents as helpers has predominated, with parents

invited to help with programs or activities that school personnel have planned. There is certainly potential for developing a collaborative model as well as a support model for parent involvement. For example, in the March meeting of four teachers to discuss future hopes, there was a request for teacher-parent planning teams. Clear leadership, specific structures, and continued exposure to successful models would be important in translating this hope into reality.

4. Parent Involvement in Learning Activities at Home.

Mini-grants. Jean Krasnow from IRE coordinated the mini-grant program both at Ellis and P.S. 111. There were eleven projects funded at Ellis, and most drew parents into roles of helping their children with learning activities at home.

One of the most successful projects developed was "Raise a Reader." As described by Krasnow (1990):

The teacher researchers applied for \$200 grants for books for each classroom library. They purchased books that emphasized multicultural themes. Each book was labelled and prepared with a library pocket and card. On the wall of each classroom was a large poster board which also had library pockets on it, one for each child in the class. Thus, a child chose a book to take home, signed the card, and put it in his/her pocket on the poster board. The program began in one kindergarten, a second and a third grade. The teachers wrote letters home to the families explaining the project, asked for the parents' help, and stressed the importance of parents and children reading together. The letters asked the parents to read to their children 3-4 times each week. For the younger grades, parents sewed bright red cloth bags for the children to carry their books home. The red

bags became a signal -- here come the readers! (pp. 28-29).

Evaluations of the program's effectiveness were carried out by the teacher researchers. Over half the parents responded to a questionnaire sent home asking them: 1) whether they had been able to take the time to read the stories to their child each day; 2) whether the experience had been enjoyable for them and their child; 3) whether they'd like to see the experience continued in the future; and 4) whether the project had helped them.

The responses are very revealing and positive. All the

parents who responded wanted to see the program continued. They found several things valuable: setting aside time to read with their child on a regular basis, having good books at the right level, understanding what their children knew about reading and seeing their progress. Many parents mentioned their children's enthusiasm for the task and the closeness they felt when reading with their children. Some mentioned pleasure at developing a regular routine, and the pride they felt when their child came home with a star.

The only difficulty mentioned by some parents was time: if they were working nights, single parents, had several children, or had many tasks to do at home after work, it was hard to find the time every day. Only three of 20 parents of kindergarten children mentioned these obstacles (17 were reading regularly; there were 49 children in the two kindergartens). Fourteen parents of the 29 children in Toney's second grade class responded to the survey. Of these, nine were reading every night, and the remainder were reading aloud, but not every day. All of the second graders reported taking books home regularly, and 22 reported reading them to someone at home. The third graders in Rhodes' class who responded to a "kid's questionnaire" were taking the books home and reading them (11 of 14), but not necessarily reading them aloud (5 of 11).

Children reported that they enjoyed having the books and felt that the project was developed to help them read more or read better. One second-grader thought the project was begun, though, "because she (the teacher) loves us." Only one child in the third grade had a negative response. She was not reading her books aloud, and when asked "How do you feel when you finish reading a book to someone in your family?" she replied "sad and angry."

Teachers saw a change in the children's reading or pre-reading skills. Ruth Williams said: "I am noticing that the kids are reading the books. That is, they have really memorized the words and pictures and come in and read them in class." (See Appendix 5 for additional data.)

There were several other mini-grant projects as well. Natalie Nathan, teacher in the fourth grade advanced work class, requested funds for a project called "Finding Your Own History," which involved interviewing family members and collecting pictures and memorabilia for scrapbooks. In addition to scrapbooks, the minigrant allowed the purchase of a book for each child, The Secret of Gumbo Grove by Eleanora Tate. This story described a girl who was researching the history (and secrets) of her community by exploring cemeteries and old church records. Dolores Goode worked with the class as part of the community portrait project, and she and another teacher (who had received training in oral history techniques) taught the children through modeling and role playing

how to do an interview.

Carole Whitfield, a first grade teacher, supplemented her home reading program by purchasing stuffed animals that resembled characters in the stories. For example, children could take home a stuffed animal caterpillar and The Very Hungry Caterpillar as part of their book program. Children wrote about the books and the matching animals in their journals and in stories.

A fourth grade teacher prepared a video with and about teachers, parents, and children demonstrating and explaining the importance of reading. The video was shown several times in the Parent Center. Mary O'Neil, in the fourth grade, arranged for eight parents to come to class to talk about their careers. Children and parents worked on the presentations together, and they too were captured on videotape. Parents were asked to help children in the fourth grade write their autobiographies. This project required the purchase of new software and was a joint effort of the computer specialist, Sharon Beck, and teacher Diane Stafford.

In these mini-grants, parents generally functioned as resources and supports for their children's learning at home. Communications from school helped parents to understand what the projects were and why they were being done. High levels of parent participation were documented for the Raise a Reader project. More than half of the parents polled sent in an evaluation form developed by the teacher research team. Teachers and parents reported high motivation among the children (and generally themselves), and improvement in reading and pre-reading skills as a result of the school-home connection.

Other Activities. A library of materials was added to the counseling center so that both parents and children could draw on literature to help them learn about crises. A fifth grade teacher added to the collection of early adolescent literature so that children could check out useful books and read them at home. IRE staff members Krasnow and Page collected materials to support parent involvement in learning at home that had been used in other schools. Handouts (e.g., on interesting ideas for activities with children, or on ways to help children learn about calendars or acquire new vocabulary words) were available in the Parenting Center for teachers to share with parents or for parents to select themselves. These resources were apparently not extensively used.

Commentary. The mini-grants were effective in connecting parents to their children's learning. The sustained Raise a Reader programs that were initiated throughout the early grades represented a major effort to involve parents. The programs were successful in increasing home-school communication, increasing children's reading time (and in several cases reading skills), and creating a pleasurable context for home learning. Other mini-

grants (parents' careers, family history projects) drew on parents' expertise and resources to extend the classroom curriculum. Asking parents about their reactions to the Raise a Reader program was an important way of demonstrating further interest in parents' reactions and experiences about this home learning effort.

There was an unintended benefit from this part of the research effort. The extent and nature of the parents' commitment to and pleasure in the program was surprising to the teacher researchers. For example, Ruth Williams (kindergarten teacher) said, "I never heard such things from parents -- but then, I never asked before."

The Raise a Reader program focused on partnership as defined by the School to Home transmission model; the career and family history projects followed a more interactive model, in which parents' expertise as sources of information and resources were integrated into the curriculum and the planning.

5. Parent Involvement in Advocacy and Decision Making

Year One. During the first year of the grant, SRO established an executive planning committee to coordinate its efforts at the Ellis. Membership included the principal as chair, five parents, three teachers, the Key Teacher, the site facilitator, two staff members from the District Office, and a representative of an outside agency (Boston Partners in Education). The committee met three times from November to the Christmas break, and then monthly through May.

Parent attendance was high until December, but declined thereafter. Generally, only Sue Burns, a white parent of a child in the Advanced Work Group, attended after December. Aida Beltran resigned from her part-time responsibilities at the Center at the end of January; a parent replacement on the committee was not named. Parent suggestions were made and listened to, but especially as parent attendance diminished, this group was small and did not represent a cross-section of Ellis' parents. Part of the problem was that most of the parents worked, and the meetings were held during the day.

Parents were involved in several different Councils during the first year of the project, including the School Improvement Council, the School-Parent Council, and the SRO Council. The Ellis school had received a significant grant from the Massachusetts Board of Regents of Higher Education in order to collaborate with a consortium of colleges in planning for school improvement. (This project also had a planning group, but without parent representation). This array of Councils seemed to confuse everybody, especially since there was much overlapping of goals, funds, and programs. Sue Burns spoke about this fragmentation during the May 1989 Executive Council meeting and urged more structure, clearer goals for the parent outreach program, and more

action. Burns spoke of wanting parents to be more empowered to do things on their own to prepare for the time when funding would be gone.

The end of the first year was capped by a wonderful model of joint planning. Parents, teachers, administrators, and IRE staff were involved in a three-day planning session from June 27-29th, 1989, whose goal was to clarify the school's goals for the next year and to develop action steps to implement them. Parent involvement was a component of each of the four targeted areas, namely: offering counseling; developing a physical education program, implementing a whole language initiative, and incorporating multi-cultural programs and curriculum throughout the school. Parents were included in equal numbers with teachers. The process encouraged input and reflection, and several parents participated forcefully. This was a meeting that was full of enthusiasm and promise; a meeting of common purpose, inclusion, as well as some anxiety about accomplishing all that was planned.

Year Two. Because of the amount of staff and administrative turnover (both principals and 14 teachers), principal Carlos Gibb was concerned that these goals might no longer reflect the wishes of school personnel, and he did not act on these recommendations in the new year. In fact, they were never formally discussed.

As he had done in New York, during the summer and early fall, Don Davies urged Gibb and the new area superintendent, Joe Bage, to initiate a School-Community Planning Council at the Ellis. A Council began work in November after school-wide elections. The principal and five teachers represented the school, and SRO staff occasionally attended its monthly meetings. The Council did not include parents, because according to Gibb, the school was not yet ready for parent membership on the Council.

There was a written statement of goals developed in March 1990 for the purposes of spending money allocated to the school by the state for school improvement. Achievement and grade level objectives were specified for all students, and a request was made for \$40,520 to be allocated for an Integrated Learning System Computer Lab as a necessary resource in accomplishing these objectives. Sue Burns and Annie White signed the official form as parents as did three of the teachers on the School Planning Council. However, to my knowledge, parents were not involved in developing these goals or contemplating alternatives for spending the allocated funds (see further discussion in Chapter Five).

Generally the second year of the project had a dearth of parent involvement in joint planning efforts. SRO did not continue its own Executive Planning Council. The School Parent Council (a group consisting only of parents) did continue, but was not very active.

In the absence of a more formal and systematic channel for parent advocacy, decision making, and communication with the school, the parent coordinators assumed this task. However, their informal contacts with teachers and the principals were devoted to advocating for particular children, for parents in need of resources, or for the needs of the Parent Center generally.

Commentary. Cultures are not static, and a great deal of effort is required to transform one. During the first year, SRO put significant effort into team building among parents, teachers, administration, and the SRO staff. The Executive Planning Board, the showcase of this vision, struggled to find a common purpose and strategy and did indeed develop a process that was open and participatory. The talking and struggling required to forge a team seemed to be frustrating to the parent members of the Council, and addressing parents' concerns on the Council would have needed to be a priority in future Council work.

The initiation of a Parent Center, several intensive staff and then staff and parent planning sessions, and many successful joint activities created space and time for individuals with very different backgrounds to discuss and try out their views of what a school that supported success for all children would look like. This was a necessary beginning. Principal Florence Hadley described the year as a learning process that began to build commitment. She felt that teachers invested voluntarily in the planning process. For example, at a required planning meeting for staff, she said that only two teachers came only because they had to. She summarized: "IRE has given us pride, lifted our spirits, and worn us out!"

Gibb, the new principal, has a vision for the school that includes high expectations for children and a high level of collegiality among staff (see Chapter Five for additional information about the principal's vision). As a first year principal, his primary goal has been to "get his house in order," clarifying expectations and hopes for the school's future and setting standards for teaching through the teacher evaluation process. The strategies for achieving his vision have not matched SRO's. He has said that the school is not yet ready for school-based management, and he seems uneasy with joint decision-making. His emphasis on a computer lab as opposed to an integrated curriculum that stresses whole language and multicultural approaches has been jarring to those parents and teachers who were part of the goal-setting activities last year. He has not actively sought the expertise of IRE staff, and the staff have not insisted on sharing it. The culture of the school is therefore shifting once again, and the result of two such strong forces moving in different directions seems this year to be a lack of movement towards partnership or school improvement.

It is possible that if SRO had had more time in this school

that the different orientations toward home-school partnership might have been confronted and negotiated. The fact that so many of the staff were new to the school and that this was SRO's "last year" made it difficult for SRO staff to begin the relationship building process anew. For SRO, this was understandably the year for results; for half of the school, this was a year for beginning to understand a new school and coming to know one another. The commitment to parent collaboration that was built in Year One was too fragile to withstand the inevitable insecurities experienced by first-year staff and their lack of familiarity with working with parents in collaborative roles.

6. Community-School Partnership

Year One. Several efforts were made to reach out to the community during the first year of the project. For example, the key teacher contacted several agencies and individual resources in the Boston Public School to help her develop the concept of the School Support team and to provide back-up referrals to families. The park project enlisted suggestions from Habitat and Jeff Winokur, a science consultant from Wheelock College. Much deeper connections seemed to be made with the Afro-American Museum around the corner. Not only did the museum staff contribute ideas to the park project, but after-school meetings were frequently held there, and students enriched their curriculum through visits and discussions with museum staff. Additional resources were tapped. For example, Walter Drew of the Boston Public Schools Recycling Center and Leland Clark, a consultant from the Boston Public Schools, offered activities for parents.

Business partnerships were explored. Because of the Superintendent of Schools' Laval Wilson's recommendation to Merrill Lynch, The Ellis was chosen as a site for a college scholarship program for children in first grade who would eventually graduate from high school. New England Telephone Co. offered resources to the school, but agreement on the details could not be reached.

Community representation was included on the Executive Planning Council from District A (central administration) and Boston Partners in Education (a volunteer training organization). Because the Regents grant to create a model school was also in gear at this time, there were many other contacts with resource persons from Simmons College, Wheelock College, and Boston University.

Year Two. As described above, the Parent Center coordinators and the Parent Support Workers constituted a referral network for many parents, providing them with information about appropriate agencies and organizations and information or support about how to use them. Dolores Goode's community portrait project connected children and teachers to the Museum of the National Center of Afro-American Artists; to Elma Lewis, musician and dramatist; and to John Wilson, a local sculptor.

Vivan Johnson was instrumental in recruiting tutors for children through the Black Student Association at MIT. During the first year of the project, six students were involved. Twenty-seven students participated in the second year; half were Spanish-speaking. According to Johnson, tutors "were friends, helpers, counselors and role models and constantly demonstrated their commitment to assist in the academic and social development of young children" (1990b p. 12). The tutors worked in classrooms and raised money for a field trip for the children to the Children's Museum. The tutors made important contributions to the school by providing role models and individualized instruction to children; they benefited from the opportunity to work in a public school and develop relationships with children and teachers.

My interviews with five teachers who had had experience with tutors from MIT or the Boston Partners in Education suggested that they had found it hard to use the volunteers productively. They did not know when they would arrive and found it hard to prepare appropriate tasks ahead of time. One teacher mentioned asking a volunteer to take down letters from the bulletin board, and he stuck them all together, so she could not use them again. Several of the teachers explicitly mentioned a need for coordination to assess the skills of volunteers, schedule their arrival, and plan appropriate tasks. On the other hand, Johnson interviewed teachers whose experiences were very positive and who stated that tutors had improved children's mathematics skills and grades.

I think that the presence of 27 students from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology is a significant contribution and potentially a very importance source of connection and modeling for youngsters. Coordination of the effort so that it is more predictable and useful to teachers (and potentially more rewarding to the volunteers) would be a logical next step. Even more useful would be connecting these students to the academic mission of success for all children, so that their skills could enhance individualized or small group instruction for youngsters, as was done in King Open School in Cambridge, Massachusetts (See Moses, Kamii, Swap, and Howard, 1989).

Commentary. The staff of the SRO project changed during the second year of the project. The new district superintendent did not provide funds for the key teacher position which Tammarrah Lee had occupied, but did provide additional money for substitute teachers. The site facilitator position which Jennifer Page had held was eliminated. The Parent Center coordinator and assistant coordinator became paid positions (15 and then 20 hours per week). Anne White, the parent coordinator, was new to the school. Vivian Johnson of IRE became the Project Director, and Jean Krasnow of IRE was often in the school as coordinator of the teacher research and mini-grant programs. In this changed configuration, no one was directly responsible for school-based community outreach or for planning formal parent education or teacher inservice programs for

SRO. Although some useful activities occurred (Study Seminar, two speakers, tutorial program, community portrait activities), they were not part of a coherent plan developed through a needs assessment or in response to changes occurring at the school during the second year of the project.

Parent Involvement and Success for All Children: Conclusions

Summary. The high points of the parent involvement component of the SRO project at the Ellis included the development of the Parent Support Team, the outreach to parents and children in crisis through the Parent Center, and several activities that brought parents and teachers together in pleasant and supportive contexts (e.g., Visiting Week, Multicultural Potluck Dinner, Teacher Appreciation Luncheon). Because of these activities and events and the special efforts made to reach out to Hispanic parents, I think the school has become seen as responsive to family needs, and the networks of connections are richer among parents and between home and school.

Interesting models were initiated but not continued that supported parent involvement in decision-making (e.g., the Executive Planning Council) and parent support in the classroom (parent volunteers). Communication was improved through the breakfasts, and the telephone chain and newsletters were successful insofar as they were utilized. Regular communication between teachers and parents, particularly face-to-face communication around children or curricular issues continues to be rare and uncomfortable for most teachers.

Most of the new connections that were established between home and school fit the school to home transmission model, where educators make choices and ask parents to support them. The important and successful Raise a Reader minigrant projects were the most comprehensive efforts to involve parents in their children's learning, and they reflect this model. Mini-grant projects that drew on family members' history, experience, and career expertise; and the Three Kings Day and Multicultural Dinner followed a more interactive philosophy. These kinds of projects could certainly be expanded in the future. Efforts to bring parents into the school in a spirit of joint planning that began in the June planning meetings were not continued this year.

Throughout the life of SRO at Ellis, there has been debate about whether the focus of the parent outreach should be "hard to reach" parents or all parents in the school. The debate is evident in reports from the site facilitator and key teacher to IRE, in my interviews with key personnel, and in Executive Committee Planning meetings. Those with major responsibility for designing activities did focus on the hard to reach, and did so in a productive, empowering way, with important results. (See further discussion in Chapter Five.) Sometimes, school intervention simply meant that

the crisis that was interfering with family functioning was abated. With parents in the outreach program, however, intervention could be transforming by modeling for parents a wider range of home teaching skills, by sharing information about resources, and by training parents in advocacy skills.

Efforts to achieve partnership (as in Model 3) have been confined to just two settings: the Executive Committee Planning Council and the June planning seminar. Ideally, the school leadership will provide more opportunities for involving parents as decision makers in the future, and training will be provided for both parents and staff to learn how to work together while accommodating differences in race, class, and role. The problem of incorporating only parents with "social capital" in decision-making roles was raised by IRE staffer Jennifer Page but not systematically addressed.

Teacher Attitudes Toward Parent Involvement. As at P.S. 111, the teacher research team interviewed 15 of their colleagues in September 1989, to determine their attitudes toward parent involvement. (There are 28 teachers.) Opinions were more varied at the Ellis than at P.S. 111, with two of the 15 teachers conveying a vision of real partnership; most (11) seeing parents as helpers (assistants in the classroom, volunteering in the library, helping on field trips, helping with homework and quizzes, taking children to interesting places); and two being concerned that parents recognize and adhere to their designated roles ("Parents should adhere to rules...trust teachers to do what is right by their children; trust the fact that teachers are following the program;" "The responsibility of parents ends at home; teachers are responsible for teaching."). The two "visionary" statements are quoted below:

Perhaps the scene is too idealistic -- but I envision a school where administration, teachers, parents, and students as well as the entire staff work together as a community. A school community that welcomes, accepts, trusts, and supports parents in their endeavors to nurture, rear, and educate their youngsters.

Parents working with the school in any capacity they can, whether it is in the classroom, being involved in planning activities at the school, helping to make decisions around curriculum, supplies, or materials. Also at home doing activities to help children with schoolwork, parents supporting the teachers in any endeavor that involves the students.

Teachers have not had much experience in working with parents in school, and they have a range of concerns about the reality of collaborating. Teachers mentioned worries, such as: nothing will get done; parents won't know what their tasks are; or parents and teachers might have different priorities for children's education. These are not unreasonable worries in a setting where no training and coordination for parent involvement in school is yet available. One teacher felt very distant from parents and expected the worst in background and behavior.

This sounds terrible, but...some parents are low-skilled and illiterate. Such parents would have to be willing to accept correction. Parents should not be permitted to bring their toddlers into the classroom, and parents would have to refrain from drinking alcohol and smoking if they chose to work in the classroom.

On the other hand, most teachers anticipated that several benefits might accompany parent involvement in school. Almost all spoke of benefits to children's self-esteem, academic performance, achievement scores, behavior, and/or attitudes about school. Some hoped for benefits to parents (learning how to teach their own children), and one teacher hoped that teachers would learn to become more responsive to the individual needs of children.

In conclusion, there is no ground swell supporting more intensive involvement of parents (or community volunteers) at school, though parent support for school functions is appreciated. At this point, the closeness to parents that teachers seem interested in seeking seems carefully calibrated: contact at dinners and celebrations is enjoyable and productive; support for field trips and classroom activities would be useful under certain circumstances; but communication at breakfast meetings felt a little tense for most teachers this year.

I do not find the teachers' reactions surprising. For example, although the breakfast contacts were carefully orchestrated by IRE staff, teachers were not offered training in how to handle the complexities of explaining one's curriculum or dealing with challenging questions from parents. They were aware that difficult situations could (and did) arise, and there was little incentive to expose oneself to such challenges.

There is some interest in closer collaboration. Most teachers have had much more exposure to parent involvement in these two years than in previous years, and most of that contact has been positive, supportive of them, and supportive of children's learning. As Johnson has described (1990a), the SRO project has changed the message about home-school connections to one of "good news." Opportunities for informal chats with good food at

breakfasts or dinners; connections through the Parent Outreach, mini-grants, and Raise a Reader programs; emphasis on multicultural events, letters home in Spanish and English, and ESL classes for Spanish-speaking parents have all created a new scaffolding for partnership built from pleasant contacts and mutual support. The SRO activities have created a rich context for further involvement if it could be well-managed, sequenced according to a developmental model (see Chapter Two), and supported by the school administration.

If the school has not yet arrived at a consensus that a model of home-school partnership is desirable, there is also little belief in the radical possibility of success for all children, as we shall see in the next section. With neither of these attitudes firmly in place, the time has not yet arrived for them to be joined, such that the community believes that success for all children can only be achieved through a home-school-community partnership.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE ELLIS AND SUCCESS FOR ALL CHILDREN

The fates seemed to conspire to keep a vision of success for all children at the Ellis tantalizingly out of reach. A combination of "non-normalized" conditions, lack of clarity from IRE, staff turnover, and particular leadership styles slowed progress toward these goals during the two years of the project.

Attitudes toward Success for All Children

Administrative Perspective. As mentioned previously, the Ellis has had two different principals and two different assistant principals in the two years of the SRO project. I will summarize the responses of Florence Hadley (first year principal) and Carlos Gibb (second year principal) to my interview questions about success for all children.

In our first interview, Hadley, an African-American woman who had been principal at the Ellis for six years, underlined the importance of high expectations for children. She said that "Teachers have to live up to that, because the higher the expectations are, the more likely children are to live up to them." At the same time, she recognized that: "Not everybody in this school is committed to higher expectations, but they wouldn't dare say so."

She stressed the importance of individualizing instruction for children and developing alternate ways of reaching goals, but she also said that if children came from troubled, single-parent families that "of course, they can't do well." Later she clarified her views by saying that there were some exceptions, and that single parents who were fairly articulate, who showed a great deal of interest, who read a lot and expected a lot could help their children be successful. Her experience suggested that the children whose parents have high expectations for their children tended to do best in school. In response to a question about who doesn't do well in school, she said that if a child doesn't dress well, if his parents don't show up, if he doesn't present himself well, he is not as likely to do well. She also said that children with "innate talent" were able to overcome difficult backgrounds.

Hadley was open, friendly, and secure in the interview. She smiled often and emphasized her work with children who needed a little extra boost. She spoke of retirement and her long connection to the community. She also emphasized the fragmentation of the project during the first year, the fact that it took her one or two months to figure out what the project was doing, and that the number of meetings was burdensome. My interpretation of this interview was that Hadley felt that family background was a major

contributor to children's success in school, and that her experience had not led her to conclude that success for all children was possible.

Carlos Gibb is a tall, good-looking African-American of Latino heritage with flashing eyes and a powerful voice. This is his first experience as principal. He gives the impression of energy and conviction, of impatience and restlessness. In our first interview in October, he emphasized that you could not necessarily tell a successful school just by test scores. He said that an exciting educational environment, people working together, and parents involved were the real indicators. He hoped that the barriers to parent involvement could be overcome: that parents would see teachers as people and see that teachers care, and that teachers would see parents as teachers of their children. He said that you "can't have a successful school in this day and age without the involvement of parents." We were interrupted several times by children who were confused about their school assignments, and Vivian Johnson and I ended up sharing time since his schedule was very crowded. He mentioned to both of us his interest in bringing a computer lab into the school to support individualized instruction.

In an interview on February 6, I asked Gibb to talk further about the possibility of success for all children at the Ellis, and to identify both promising developments and difficulties in getting the job done. He stressed that "the first thing that needs to be done is for the professionals in the building to believe, to honestly believe that the children can accomplish and that **they** can make a difference." He continued, "Many people just go about their job. They don't allow themselves to dream anymore. I see success for all children as an attainable goal."

We discussed how he would move the school toward this goal. He felt that existing attitudes could be changed and hoped that those who did not feel up to the challenge would choose to go somewhere else. He would take advantage of opportunities to bring teachers to the school who agreed with his goals. Aside from that, he planned to "tie teachers into professional development opportunities that we offer as a system." He would encourage those who had not been taking advantage of inservice opportunities to do so and share what they had learned with the rest of the staff. If they refused, that could become an issue in evaluation. When asked whether he had additional ideas about how he would move the school forward, he mentioned that "People need to see some small successes and be given recognition for what they do well" within the reality of the financial situation. He did not anticipate altering curriculum or instruction (e.g., eliminating tracking, changing the schedule) to encourage changes in children's achievement.

My feeling at the time of this interview, buttressed by further observation and review of strategies in other sites, is

that the strategies that Gibb identified are not sufficient to support the transformation of attitudes and practices needed to create success for all children. Although other principals have identified the need to "clean house" and build a cadre of committed teachers (see Chapters Six and Seven), this is only one of several directions that needs to be pursued to transform a school. Like Kinzelberg during the first year of the project, the steps required for systematic implementation of their vision seemed unclear. Kinzelberg was very clear in asking for suggestions; Gibb seemed to want to set his own course.

Teacher Perspective. In interviews with the teacher research team and the first year key teacher, success for all children was not a dominant theme. The themes I did hear repeatedly were that children were different from one another, and that many of these children were stressed by factors outside of school. One teacher's remarks were quite characteristic. In answer to the question, "Do you think that all children can be successful?" she said: "I think all children can learn. They can learn at their own rates and at different times. All children can be successful in some ways, but not all children can be successful in the same ways. Not all children can do well in academics. Some children have hidden talents." This teacher went on to say that she had "bright, slow, and average children" but that you could not always determine at an early age which children would be gifted, because she knew from her own experience that sometimes she did well at school and sometimes not so well.

IRE staff members Jean Krasnow and Vivian Johnson mentioned to me in an early interview that it was hard to work on the concept of success for all children in an environment that was not yet "normalized." Teachers were working in a setting where there were many troubled children but no counseling services; where children did not have access to safe playgrounds or activities after school, and where there was no physical education program during school hours. As Nora Toney, a second grade teacher, explained to her colleagues during the May 17 Professional Day: "It's mind-boggling the adult problems which children must face at an early level. Twenty-five percent of our children have experienced the emotional trauma of neglect, gang violence, poverty, alcoholism, abuse. Kids can't even begin to focus on academic issues. Our kids have a right to be happy, and we need to show them how."

Jean Krasnow reported pulling a fourth grader from a bathroom window from which he was preparing to jump. Keitha Hassell, a fourth grade teacher, reported one of her children telling her: "I'm happy that I'm alive today," in response to the question, "What do you feel good about?" Thus, two major efforts of the teacher/parent teams during the first year of the project were to secure counseling and physical education for children. Many teachers seemed to feel that basic survival and safety issues needed to be attended to first, and then further progress in

academic achievement could be sought.

It is also interesting to note that the both the Ellis and the P.S. 111 teachers emphasized common directions to support academic and emotional growth in children. In addition to the two goals mentioned above, the teacher-parent work teams (the expanded School Improvement Council) also wanted to work on expanding the emphasis on literature/reading and increasing multicultural programs as goals for school improvement during the following year. Both initiatives seemed critical to building a sense of community in the school as well as responding to the interests and needs of the children. The focus was not on creating success for all children at the Ellis, but on building a healthy environment for children and teachers. Nonetheless, systematic and vigorous pursuit of these goals might have resulted in both.

Another mission that was very important to the key teacher, Tammarrah Lee, was supporting "hard-to-reach" parents. Though uncomfortable with that term, which she felt was a label which allows parents "to be misjudged and dealt with improperly," (December 1988 Progress Report), her major goal was in her words, to "empower these parents to help their children and help themselves. By uniting together with community agencies and local institutions, WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN OUR CHILDREN'S LIVES" (p. 8).

In an interview with Lee on May 23, 1989, she continued to articulate her dream, which was to create a school within a school, a core group of teachers working with children chosen by a certain set of criteria. Both parents and children would be supported; the group would be ethnically balanced; and the focus would be on prevention of later difficulties. This dream, I think, reflects the combining of Lee's counseling and teaching backgrounds in an ecological model that integrates the direct services of school, student and parent support teams, and appropriate agencies.

By the end of the year, Lee was feeling alienated from the IRE staff. She and IRE site facilitator Jennifer Page did not develop a good working relationship. A fundamental reason was that Lee agreed to the role of key teacher primarily to help realize her dream. She was not equally committed to extending the scope of her efforts to reach out to other parents and teachers, or to the four goals that the planning groups developed, and she felt that the IRE staff was not consistently sensitive to her or to the needs of the families she represented. I think this conflict in missions, with Lee wanting to focus on "hard-to-reach" parents, and IRE seeking a much broader thrust both in terms of audience and goals, was a significant contributor to the disillusionment that Lee and Page experienced with each other. Unfortunately, this conflict was never directly confronted or resolved by the IRE staff or principal Hadley, and their difficulties with each other were seen as personality conflicts. Lee was not invited to return to the role

of the key teacher during the second year of the project, nor did Jennifer Page continue as site facilitator. Continuity in mission, goals, and leadership was therefore further compromised.

IRE Guidance. As at P.S. 111, during the first year, IRE was identified with parent outreach. During the final meeting of the Executive Planning Council, Don Davies said, "I didn't make it clear in ways which reached everybody that this was not a parent involvement project, but a project to demonstrate how all children could reach academic and social success. The involvement of community and parents was and is seen as a way to help that happen, to create a whole new image of partnership." Davies went on to say that he was very encouraged by the goal-setting meeting that had occurred the day before. He explained that each of the four goals (physical education, multicultural programs, reading/literature, counseling) was tied to student success, and that SRO could use its resources to help the school reach those goals. He concluded: "Now there's something for us to attach to."

During the second year of SRO, the delay in the establishment of the School Planning Council, the elimination of the key teacher and site facilitator positions, and failure to reconvene the four teacher-parent planning and implementation teams disrupted SRO's attachment to the mission of success for all children. SRO retained visibility through the Parent Center and its activities, the two seminars which focused on parent involvement, and the Teacher Research Team. Programs for teachers or the community which would emphasize the transforming vision of success for all children were not initiated by SRO during Year Two.

Commitment to an Explicitly Defined Mission

Success for All Children. There was no explicit school-wide commitment to the mission of success for all children. There were no school-wide or community meetings held to identify this thrust, secure commitment to it, or discuss implementation strategies. Although some teachers were familiar with this concept, none agreed that it was a mission of the school. To illustrate, one teacher, when asked whether the concept of success for all children was a major thrust in the school said, "You'd have to examine each person. It depends on the outlook of each individual teacher." When I said that "Mr. Gibb has this as a goal. Would the other faculty know?", she replied that she had "heard him say that teachers couldn't waste children's time when they were at risk already. He was really angry! He has said enough about how he feels about the children. But it depends on the person and where they are in their career and expectations."

Reaching Out to "Hard-to-Reach" Parents. Although as we have seen, this was the dream of the key teacher, this did not become a school-wide mission. Tammarrah Lee was very active in offering services to children and families herself and in coordinating the

support of all relevant parties on behalf of identified families. Later, the coordinators of the Parent Center continued these activities and the Parent Support Workers were added to reach out in additional ways to families who had not been connected to the school. But teachers and administrators were not committed to these activities as the mission of the school, and no ongoing structures were built (such as Comer's Staff and Student Support Team, a structure which is required in every Comer school) that would highlight, coordinate, and maintain this effort.

The Four Goals of the Planning Groups. As we have seen, there was commitment by the staff (with the exception of the key teacher, whose priorities were with "hard-to-reach" parents), the administrators, and several parents to pursuing four goals by the close of the 1989-1990 academic year. To review, these goals were to increase the amount of physical education and counseling in the school, to improve reading by pursuing an enriched literary environment and a whole language approach, and to expand multicultural curriculum and programs throughout the school.

Although individual teachers continued to pursue the goals agreed to in these meetings during 1989-1990, school-wide activities to support them ceased. Nonetheless, several gains in each of the four areas occurred. A part-time physical education instructor was hired for 1989-1990 and there is a request for a full-time physical education instructor (to replace a reading teacher) for 1990-1991. Through Nora Toney's initiative (Toney was the leader of the counseling planning group and a second grade teacher) and the support of Gibb, a local community counseling agency provided a counselor to work two days a week at the school during 1989-90. Mini-grant funds were used primarily for the purchase of books and other literary materials, and the selection of multicultural materials was the most consistent theme in their selection. An unanticipated benefit of the planning activities was that teachers **moved their classrooms** at the end of the 1989-1990 year to enhance grade-level teaming and communication and increase connections between bilingual and regular classroom teachers at the same grade level.

Computer Support for Individualized Instruction and Literacy. As mentioned above, Carlos Gibb was interested in acquiring a computer lab supported by the Integrated Learning System to support individualized instruction and to enhance progress in raising students' academic achievement scores and meeting grade level objectives. Gibb arranged for a demonstration of this system at a Council meeting that I attended, but teachers had not realized that this demonstration would be part of the agenda, had no orientation about why it was being demonstrated, and no context for evaluating its relative merits. In fact, Gibb was a half hour late to the meeting, and the salesperson began the demonstration because of the growing embarrassment of the teachers present. After the

demonstration was over and in the midst of another discussion, Gibb said: "Okay, let's back up. We have \$40,000. We'll explore the computer, and I'll let you know the options and the type of commitment we'll make. The rest of the money goes to textbooks and manipulatives." This is in fact how the money (\$1,130 in School Improvement funds and \$40,520 in EEOG Opportunity School funds) was allocated in the FY '91 School Plan of the Ellis School Improvement Council.

The report of the School Improvement Council was developed in two sessions of the School Planning Council in the spring, and the plan was signed by five teachers, three parents, and representatives of IRE, the Urban League, the Dorchester Counseling Center, and the Dimock Community Health Center. As I understand it, parents were not involved in discussing these priorities, and teachers outside of the Council were not tapped for opinions. Thus, although the structure for joint planning was present, there was no evidence of shared decision-making. Although goals and objectives of the school were identified, there is no evidence that the mission was shared or that the process for achieving it was understood or endorsed by the community. To my knowledge, there has been no planning with teachers about how the new technology will be used to support general or specific curriculum and instruction goals, nor have teachers been involved in developing plans for them to learn about the potential of the system.

Changes in Practice to Support the Mission

To my knowledge, other than activities to support parent involvement described in Chapter Four, there has been no school-based change in practice to support any of the goals described above.

Training for Participants to Support the Mission

IRE offered or supported several activities to increase participants' knowledge and experience with parent involvement. For example, IRE contributed to a staff training program for all teachers (offered in January and March 1989) on problem-solving that included content on parent involvement and ways to reach out. In March 1989, teachers were invited to watch a video "The Home-School Connection," and approximately 12 teachers attended. The principal and Annie White attended a lecture by James Comer offered through the Boston Public Schools, who was describing the model of parent involvement and school improvement that he initiated in New Haven. Several teachers (10-12) attended a sandwich seminar with David Seeley to discuss new approaches to parent involvement and urban education. Teachers and parents were invited to hear presentations by Joyce Epstein, a member of the National Commission, who described her research in parent involvement; and Rafael Valdivieso, Vice President of the Hispanic Policy Development Project in Washington who was very involved with parent

participation in schools.

The teacher research team was a form of staff development that supported teachers in formulating questions and seeking answers about parent involvement in the school. The teacher research team has been a very positive experience for the teachers and is certainly a model for teacher empowerment and professional development that is important to continue. The group of five teachers on the Ellis teacher research team completed several projects: the teacher interviews on parent involvement, the mini-grant evaluations, and their own mini-grants. It was clear from my observation and their testimony that they enjoyed each other's company, sought opportunities to discuss school-related issues with each other, and appreciated the opportunity to talk, to be listened to, and to listen to each other. Under the deft leadership of Jean Krasnow, who was at once empowering, humorous, informal, and challenging, the group functioned as a place to try out new ideas and receive support.

The classroom-based problem-solving that they engaged in was reminiscent of Comer's Student-Staff Support Team. For example, during one of the discussions, Nora Toney decided that keeping her current class for another year would be beneficial to these students, and subsequently requested a third grade teaching assignment with these children for next year. The teachers on the research team were involved in many of the other school activities, in part, I think, because participation in this group strengthened their commitment to each other and to the school.

Research-in-Action information sheets were circulated to teachers that summarized articles by Comer and Epstein. Access to the original articles and further information was offered by IRE staff.

Don Davies' two seminars on parent involvement attracted about 15 participants (teachers and parents). The seminars were taped and specifically evaluated by participants. The positive results of the evaluation are described in Chapter Four. In the context of staff development, they were successful in supporting active dialogue between parents and teachers on the issue of parent involvement and in offering participants new models for partnership.

All activities described above that were offered by IRE were voluntary and demonstrated a commitment to listening to the voices of teachers and treating teachers as professionals. For those teachers who participated, and particularly the teacher research team, these opportunities for staff development contributed to a new sense of what was possible.

Perhaps as important as training was modeling and prescribing

parent involvement in SRO activities: in the Executive Planning Council, the mini-grant proposals, the summer institute on planning, the many events that took place at the Parent Center. The messages that these actions conveyed were consistent: parents should be involved; they can be involved; we are not threatened by their involvement; and their involvement is a contribution. These activities stimulated risk-taking among some teachers and would have, I believe, led to more profound changes had they been integrated with a school-wide mission during the second year.

To my knowledge, the SRO project did not sponsor staff development activities on changes in teaching practice that would support success for all children. Although individual teachers took advantage of system opportunities to increase their understanding of innovations in curriculum and instruction, there were no school-based staff development efforts of which I am aware to support school goals during the second year of the project.

Support for Experimentation

Central Administration Support. The selection of the Ellis School as a site for SRO began with a close working relationship between Dr. Davies and Dr. Diana Lam, the zone superintendent. They had collaborated successfully on other projects, most recently the Early Learning Center in Brighton. She endorsed the vision of the project and personally went to the Ellis to invite teachers to participate. The Superintendent of Schools at that time, Laval Wilson, was also supportive. He agreed to be a member of the project's National Commission and attended two of three meetings in Boston. He also participated in an interview for Dolores Goode's videotape explaining the community portrait project.

Between the first and second years of the project, a reorganization of Boston school districts led to the selection of Joseph Bage as area superintendent of the district to which the Ellis school belongs. (Lam was selected as Superintendent of the Chelsea Public Schools.) Bage participated in SRO activities -- the Fathers' Breakfast and a lecture given by Joyce Epstein -- but he did not appear to be enthusiastic about the project's mission. In negotiations during the summer of 1989, for example, he did not continue the funding for the key teacher (although additional substitute time was offered), and indicated that the Parent Center might be in jeopardy because of a space crunch. In fact, as we now understand it, the Parent Center will be replaced during 1990-1991 with a bilingual kindergarten.

Continued support from the Superintendent, Laval Wilson, was lessened during the second year, as he was forced to resign in the course of a prolonged and bitter dispute with the School Committee that persisted through most of the academic year. One staff member at IRE characterized the level of central administration commitment for the project this year as: "a few degrees better than complete

withdrawal of support."

Principals. There were several factors that made it difficult for the principals to provide continuous leadership for the project. The most obvious factor was the loss of direction and continuity caused by the turnover of both the principal and the assistant principal from the first to the second year. During the first year, Florence Hadley was anticipating retirement and the assistant principal, Ann Whittredge, was exploring other jobs. During the second year, Gibb was in the role of principal for the first time, and the assistant principal, James Kirk, was also new to the role and the school.

Another factor was the style of each administrator and the fit between that style and the requirements of the SRO project. Hadley was comfortable extending considerable authority to others in the school. During her tenure, the Faculty Senate made many important decisions about the school, and Whittredge played a very important role in the work of the expanded School Improvement Council as it made decisions about school-wide goals. Though not personally assertive, Hadley was supportive of the mission of reaching out to parents and the larger community, and felt proud that the Ellis had been selected for several special programs (SRO, the Regents "Model School" grant, and the Merrill Lynch scholarship program for 26 first grade children). At the same time, she found the range of activities and third-party interveners fragmenting and confusing for the school, and said with a smile that she was "hiding behind Miss Lee" (the key teacher) during the first few months of the project because "we didn't know what we were doing." Hadley was consistently friendly and supportive, but she did not take an active role herself in articulating her vision for the project and striving to make that vision a reality.

I think Gibb had ambivalent feelings toward the project. He did not choose to have the project in the school; his immediate supervisor was not particularly supportive of the project; and the multiple goals and personnel accompanying SRO were probably distracting during his first year in the school. On the other hand, as we have seen, he supported the importance of parent involvement, and he emphasized to me his interest in collegiality among teachers.

The focus of his energy during the year was evaluating all the teachers and making it clear that a rating of excellent was no longer automatic. Evaluations of the thirteen new teachers needed to be completed by February 15 (three visits each). Three tenured teachers were also identified as not being effective teachers. This process consumed enormous amounts of his time and emotional energy, and although the teachers were generally supportive of maintaining high standards of teaching, most found the process frightening for themselves and/or their colleagues. One teacher said to me that in her dream she imagined that she told Mr. Gibb

that he was turning a lot of people off. She said, "Does he want them all (the teachers) to go away? Couldn't he work with the people he has, and try to make them better? What about the next group of teachers?"

Another problem was that during his first year in the school he did not seek the development of a common vision in the school, involve teachers and parents in meaningful ways in decision-making, or support teachers in experimenting to reach SRO goals. Although he did not say this explicitly, I think that it is very possible that he felt that the timing of this project was wrong for him. Perhaps he felt that once he had the staff he wanted, he could invest in building toward common goals, but during the first year of his principalship, he had to maintain his focus on selecting a good team. Moreover, the annoying regularities of surviving in a large city's school bureaucracy, overwhelming for any first year principal, seemed particularly burdensome in Boston this past year. On my different visits, Gibb was always dealing with a new or continuing crisis: school bus routes that had still not been adequately worked out by the system in October; procedures for parent input into choice of schools that confused everyone; repeated requests for budget cuts for the current and subsequent fiscal years reflecting continuing deterioration of the "Massachusetts miracle;" traffic guards who failed to report; multiple city-wide report forms on every topic that always had to be completed yesterday. We were never able to begin or end a meeting on schedule, and during one particularly trying day, he was trying to simultaneously complete a report on his computer, review a city-wide memo, and fit in his appointment with me.

In New York, the School Community Planning Council was the major vehicle for trying to achieve a common vision, for creating new collaborative relationships among educators and parents, and for planning and carrying out activities to support school improvement. The School Planning Council in Boston did not turn out to be a source of support for experimentation, and further, was not a successful effort from the perspective of the principal, the teachers, and the IRE staff who participated. For the principal, it was one more complication to keep track of, and he told Council members during a meeting, perhaps in a moment of frustration, that he would be "glad when it's out of here." Teachers on the Council felt that the experiment was not yet working. One reported that "We do not have a lot of input. The principal does most of the talking and deciding. Some teachers are not listened to and some are. Teachers have been like students in the eyes of the principal." Jean Krasnow brought the parent coordinator to two of the meetings, but she was not acknowledged by the principal, who ultimately told Krasnow that the Council "was not ready for parents."

The IRE staff who participated found the meetings distressing because they were not well organized, did not provide meaningful

opportunities for teachers to contribute issues or ideas, and did not result in carefully made decisions. After the winter break, Krasnow offered to help out by setting up a calendar of meetings, developing an agenda with the principal, and sending out notices. Gibb was enthusiastic, and these procedures were followed for two meetings. Subsequently, Davies told Krasnow that she was too involved in planning the meetings. After her withdrawal, meetings continued on an ad hoc basis with no written agenda or minutes. Perhaps the most telling indication of the experiment's failure is that Gibb did not choose to participate next year in the school-based management program that is now an option for schools within the Boston school system, and teachers did not ask to vote on the issue.

Commentary. For school personnel to have difficulty initiating an effective school-based management team is not at all unusual. In addition to the considerable literature on the topic (e.g., see David's 1989 summary of research), IRE's experience at P.S. 111 also indicated problems in the first several months (i.e., time taken up by too many reports; important issues not raised; not hearing teacher or parent concerns; too unwieldy; not enough time to make decisions). Yet in the case of P.S. 111, the director of SRO in New York, Barbara Jackson, was consistently involved. She drafted and presented the Working Document that initiated the council, helped to plan agendas, wrote and distributed minutes, facilitated several meetings, and expressed her point of view on issues. Kinzelberg, while admittedly worried about aspects of the Council (particularly losing veto power while retaining accountability for school activities) sought, accepted, and celebrated Barbara Jackson's help. The Council attacked these problems in the spring with the help of facilitators and made important changes in the structure of meetings to correct them.

In contrast, the Boston-based director, Vivian Johnson, did not take on a complementary role, and Krasnow was asked to limit her role in the Council. Gibb did not ask for help from IRE. When Krasnow offered it, he welcomed it, but did not note its absence when it was withdrawn. In Boston, I think there was a lot of tiptoeing around on the part of IRE and Gibb, and their mutual strategy of not confronting differences and difficulties was supported by the recognition on both sides that the project would continue only a few more months.

Sadly, I think the real losers in the Council experiment were the teachers, particularly those who had been in the school the previous year, who lost the sense of efficacy and empowerment that had been developed through hours of planning, report writing, research, and joint goal-setting the year before. As one teacher put it: "Things come and go in education. Last year was a high point -- lots of teacher input." But she explained that as a member of the Council this year, "A lot falls on us. We're the ones now who do everything. It's almost like, do I really care?"

I don't want to be a representative next year." Although teachers tend to be optimists, and circumstances next year might reinvigorate them, it is discouraging that this common school experience of investment in innovation, withdrawal of support, and disappointment was repeated through the activities of the Council.

Transformation of Existing Structures

What was New. Several new structures were created at the Ellis School as part of SKO. These included:

1. The Parent Center
2. Paid Parent Center coordinators
3. The School Planning Council
4. The mini-grants that supported parent-teacher connections
5. The educational programs and courses for parents
6. The Parent Support Workers and outreach program
7. The teacher research team
8. Parent presence in the school, as in Visiting Week, parent breakfasts, multicultural dinner.

Plans to Retain Structures. At the final National Commission Meeting, Gibb said that he would try to preserve the Parent Center, although the existing room is now designated as a bilingual kindergarten. Presumably, another space will be found. He indicated an interest in continuing the mini-grant program by utilizing funds from the school's yearly candy sale. (According to Krasnow, however, the teachers have already voted to allocate this money to classroom supplies.) Gibb reported that he had sought funds to continue the paid parent coordinator position, but did not elaborate.

Davies and other members of the IRE staff met several times with Gibb to explore future directions. In February, Davies arranged to hire an experienced consultant to work with Gibb and Council members on how to write a grant, which they hoped might occur after discussion in the Council about future goals. No such discussion occurred during the Council meetings, but the grant writer did come to work with teachers and Gibb on future plans and goals. IRE has continued to explore sources of funding to continue some of the most promising practices that emerged during the project: the mini-grants, Parent Center, and teacher research team. According to Owen Heleen at IRE, further collaboration with the Ellis will occur at the request of Ellis personnel. Hopefully, the efforts to continue each of these innovations will be successful.

Commentary and Recommendations.

I strongly recommend that a coordinator or chair be appointed to convene the teacher research group next year so that it might continue, expand to include others, or perhaps become a more formally organized teacher-student support team.

The Parent Center, Parent Support Team, and parent programs contributed to a strong parent presence in the school; offered a welcoming message to a very diverse group of parents; and provided a friendly, collaborative, socially pleasant, constructive locus for planning school-based activities. It would be a terrible loss to the school and its efforts to reach out if these structures disappeared. The next step in the development of these structures is to build closer connections between the parent programs and the classroom. More teacher and administrative input and support in connecting the parent programs to instructional goals and more deliberate, goal-driven planning is needed. As Vivian Johnson put it in her recent article in Equity and Choice (1990a), there was much "good news" in the outreach developed at the Ellis school. Hopefully, these interventions that were sparked by collaboration with IRE staff will come to be continued, "owned," adapted, and expanded by school personnel and parents at the Ellis.

Gibb mentioned to me at our final meeting in June that his biggest disappointment of the year was that so many teachers were not more involved in school activities. He was concerned about the apathy and withdrawal that he noted among teachers and planned to insist that more teachers participate next year in inservice opportunities and committee work or risk negative evaluations. My experience in the school is that teachers have been willing to reach out, but the intense and unpredictable experiences of the last two years have resulted in uncertainty and burn-out. I would suggest that a program to include more teachers in future activities be long-term, teacher-driven, socially and professionally supportive, encouraging of risk-taking; and contain predictable doses of recognition and appreciation from the principal. The effort to build trust and to develop a joint mission of parents, teachers, and administrators to support success for all children can be done, but it will take careful planning and a long-term investment, as will be described in the final chapters.

Continuous Evaluation of Practice

To review; the purpose of continuous evaluation of practice is to use indicators of school and pupil success to monitor what is working and not working in the effort to reach agreed upon goals of success for all children.

As we have seen, the structure for monitoring school improvement that was developed at the Ellis, the School Planning Council, was not an effective tool for joint decision-making or

joint problem-solving.

Currently, Carlos Gibb is monitoring achievement scores as an indicator of the effectiveness of the school in promoting success for all children. Since work at the Ellis did not progress to the point where there was an agreement on the mission or systematic change in instructional, curricular, or organizational practice, it is not surprising that student achievement scores do not reflect improvement.

Scores on the Metropolitan Achievement Test generally went down from 1987-1988 to 1988-1989. There are three exceptions: second and fourth grade mathematics scores and second grade reading scores went up. Although the 1989-90 summary statistics are not yet available from the Boston Public Schools Research and Development Department, Gibb received a student print-out on the day of our last meeting, and he indicated that the scores had declined further during the 1989-1990 year. He explained that this change was partly due to the fact that he had insisted that all students take the tests this year, a change in practice from previous years. His concern seemed well-founded. I noted, for example, that on the 1988-89 printout, only eight of the 70 first graders listed on the student roster and 27 of the 58 second graders had their individual scores listed for the achievement tests.

A comparison of Ellis scores and the summary scores for all Boston school children on the Metropolitan Achievement Tests for 1988-89, indicates a good deal of consistency. Average Boston scores are higher in first grade reading (59th vs. 47th percentile), third grade reading (54th vs. 52nd percentile), and third grade math (65th vs. 47th). Ellis scores are higher in second grade reading (60th vs. 59th), fourth grade reading (59th vs. 57th), fifth grade reading (65th vs. 56th), first grade math (68th vs. 64th), and fifth grade math (70th vs. 67th). The Ellis had advanced classes at both the fourth and fifth grade levels, which may explain higher scores at these levels.

Ellis students continue to perform poorly on the state-wide educational assessment program. Ellis students' poor performance on this test in 1986, when the tests were first given, made the school eligible for additional school improvement funds. Results of 1988 state-wide testing indicated that 51% of the children at the Ellis were in the bottom quartile in reading; 41% were in the bottom quartile in math; 54% were in the bottom quartile in science; and 56% were in the bottom quartile in social studies. Although 1986 scores were worse, the gains are not yet impressive (During 1986, bottom quartile scores in reading, math, and science were 58%, 64%, and 42% respectively).

As far as I know, there has not yet been a systematic subcommittee analysis of particular kinds of student difficulties

on achievement tests or an investigation of changes in other indicators of school success such as attendance rates or grades. The school improvement plan has set objectives for 1990-91 (e.g., "80% of all students grades 1-3 will score at or above the 65th percentile in both reading and math on the Metropolitan Achievement Tests." Students are expected to achieve these changes by practicing test taking skills, using manipulatives, and using the computer's Integrated Lab System. In my experience with Boston schools, these are fairly standard objectives and non-specific activities. I would guess that a much more individualized and careful analysis of student errors and teaching strategies to overcome them would be necessary to achieve these objectives. Perhaps equally important, there is not yet a sense that teachers are willing to take responsibility for achieving these objectives, or that important resources of time, training, or group work will be focused on the effort. In the chapters to follow, we will explore how other systems who have experienced some success are pursuing such objectives.

CHAPTER SIX

SITE VISITS

An important goal of SRO was to visit other sites where school-based innovations had led to evidence of increased success for all children, or where there seemed to be innovations in progress that seemed highly likely to lead to increased school achievement. In this chapter, I will report on visits to three different sites: to Prince George's County, Maryland, to visit three schools that followed the "School Development Program" or "Comer Process;" to the Hoover School in Redwood City, California that followed the Accelerated Schools model; and to three schools in San Diego that were responding to a system-wide initiative to encourage more parent involvement in schools.

The School Development Program

Background

"The School Development Program" or "Comer Process" has now been disseminated to sites all over the country, including California, Virginia, Arkansas, and Kansas (Comer, 1988b). Sizeable grants from the Rockefeller Foundation are supporting further expansion in the Washington, D.C. area in conjunction with Howard University. Trial of the model in middle schools and high schools in Prince George's County is also underway.

The model evolved from a collaboration begun in New Haven, Connecticut between James Comer of the Yale University Child Study Center and the New Haven school system. The project began in two elementary schools whose populations of 300 and 350 children were 99% black and almost all poor. The schools ranked near the bottom in achievement and attendance among the 33 schools in the city. Staff were discouraged and confused, and parents were distrustful and angry. Faculty from the Child Study Center worked directly with educators to develop the approach that emerged over a ten year period. (For additional information, see Comer, 1980; 1988c; Schorr, 1988).

Principles and Structures

The model that eventually emerged was based on a few strong principles:

1. A strong connection between home and school is essential. Parents and staff must work together to create a school climate that supports the overall development of students "in a way that makes academic achievement at an acceptable level possible and expected" (Comer, 1988a, p. 5). Academic achievement is not the

primary focus of this model; creating a positive school climate is.

2. School reform must reflect a comprehensive approach, "in which all groups work in a collaborative fashion and resources and programs are coordinated to establish and achieve school objectives and goals" (Comer, 1988a, p. 4).

3. The programs are driven by an emphasis on the importance of relationships for children and adults. Comer believes that children learn in part through identification, imitation, and bonding with significant adults, and that this process of relationship building with teachers is particularly at risk for minority children. The emphasis on creating strong, nurturing relationships for children within the adult community and strong, natural supportive relationships among staff and parents is a fundamental principle that permeates the Comer approach.

Schools using the "Comer Process" adopt two structures. The School Planning and Management Team (SPMT), composed of the principal, teachers, parents, and support staff develops a comprehensive school plan and a school-wide calendar of events. The plan is developed to improve the academic and social climate of the school and to plan staff development activities which support the objectives of the school and community. The SPMT meets at least monthly, though subcommittees may meet more regularly. The SPMT should reach decisions by consensus, and a "no-fault" approach to problem analysis is requested. The goal of the SPMT is to provide a vehicle and time for parents and educators to develop a common vision for the school, to reduce fragmentation, and to develop activities, curriculum, and inservice programs that contribute to agree-upon goals of school improvement. Monitoring progress through regular review of child and school outcome measures is built into the agenda of the SPMT.

The second structure that is part of the "Comer process" is the Student Staff Services Team (SSST) which may meet on a weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly basis. This team is composed of the principal, guidance counselor, teachers, a psychologist, health aide, special educators, and other appropriate personnel. Teachers or parents who are not permanent members of the team may join the group to bring up a problem or concern.

The purpose of the SSST is to avoid fragmentation in services to children by bringing all relevant personnel together to address concerns of individuals and groups in the school (students or staff.) It is a problem-solving and support group that focuses on prevention of problems as well as problem management, and on patterns of needs that emerge in the school as well as individuals' concerns. The bringing together of professionals with diverse training and the focus on the whole child often lead to reframing a problem and to the development of new skills or solutions. For example, Comer mentions that the SSST in a New Haven school

developed a Discovery Room as a transition setting where children could rediscover an interest in learning through play, and a Crisis Room as a refuge for children who were out of control. Sensitivity to children's developmental needs, a focus on the whole child, a predisposition to be innovative, and a non-punitive, inclusionary philosophy are sought through this structure.

A third element in the Comer process is collaboration with parents. Parents are members of the SPMT. They are invited to diverse social events and frequently function as volunteers or paid aides in the school. There is an effort to include parent involvement in developing curriculum, as when New Haven parents were invited to a candidates' night as part of the social studies curriculum or when parents were included in designing a curriculum of social skills.

Results

By 1975, seven years after the project had begun, behavioral problems had declined, relations between parents and staff had improved, attendance was up, and morale was high. Improvement in achievement scores took longer: it was not until 1979 that students' achievement scores on national tests reached the national average. Gains on national achievement tests were reported for the replication sites in shorter periods of time: within four to five years in Prince George's County, for example (Comer, 1988b).

Site Visit Experiences

In my visits to the schools, I was particularly interested in the process of transformation and problems encountered so that the experiences of these schools might be compared to P.S. 111 or the Ellis.

A few notes about Prince George's County: each of the three schools I visited had 300-400 pupils, was at least 90% black, and drew from families who were almost all poor. A serious problem for the Comer schools is that families move in and out of school neighborhoods at a high rate. Jan Stocklinski, who works at the central office level and organized our tour, explained that the transfer rate was 40-70%. In the schools we visited, the rate was 36% to the 50%. Central administration support for the Comer schools is very high, reflected in commitment of two very talented women to the project (Jan Stocklinski and Jean Miller Colbert), a sizeable budget, and literature about the model written by the superintendent.

In Prince George's County, the schools that were using the Comer process were also entitled to other resources because they were not racially balanced. Therefore, in addition to the resources provided to implement the School Development Program (a sizeable budget and two full-time consultants at the central office

level), the pupil to teacher ratio was limited to 20:1; each school was given a psychologist, guidance counselor, and math and language resource teachers; extended day and enrichment programs were offered; and each school boasted a fully equipped computer lab.

At Columbia Park School, the evidence of academic success was dazzling. Plaques celebrating the school's national recognition for achievement occupied a whole wall; a flag given to the school by President Reagan was placed so that its lettering was visible to children as they walked the hall; newspaper articles about the school decorated another wall; beautifully displayed science projects ran the length of two hallways. A student explained the various honors to us with poise and grace.

It was clear that the principal, Pat Green, was eager for continuous improvement. Though math scores were in the 90th percentile on national achievement tests, reading scores seemed stuck at the 50th percentile level. The SPMT had targeted reading scores for improvement, noting that the children had particular difficulty with comprehension and critical thinking skills on national tests. Consequently, several changes were in process: they converted to a reading series that emphasized comprehension over basic skills, invested in inservice for teachers on writing and reading and reading across the curriculum, and even secured dispensation from the superintendent to omit required magazine reading for students who demonstrated competency in the content by passing the pre-tests. The process of continuous evaluation and monitoring of results was very much in evidence here, and the comprehensiveness of the problem-solving efforts to address this concern was impressive.

At the Berkshire School, the emphasis on relationship building seemed palpable. Beautiful flowers from a teacher's garden were on a table on the front hall. Photos of all the staff were displayed there too, along with a big sign, "Welcome to our Guests." Photo albums on a table near the office recorded important events and people at the school, and another wall was devoted to the "Feature Family of the Month." Children's success in achieving perfect attendance was noted; reading buttons with students' names on them were displayed for the many prolific readers. Birthdays were recognized and celebrated in the library every Friday and "Fantastic Friday" provided an opportunity for a rotating group of children to engage in blowing bubbles or other activities "just for fun." Although not part of our itinerary, teachers surprised us and the principal with a lovely home-made lunch, and teachers seemed genuinely eager to welcome visitors to the classroom so they could demonstrate what they were doing and how proud they were of their children.

The bond between home and school was carefully cultivated, despite the disturbing rate of family turnover: 46% of the pupils leave every year, mostly for economic reasons. Despite the fact

that some parents hold two or three jobs, last year the principal said that 62 families were "out on the doorstep, left homeless" for failure to keep up with the rent in the apartment complex down the street (which rented for \$750 a month for a single bedroom). Parent activities focus on social relationship-building events such as "Pot Luck in the Park," visiting day, and mothers' or fathers' breakfasts. Attendance at these events this year was in the hundreds, and parents and staff work together to plan the events and bring food. Principal Rita Robinson said that the focus of the parent program had not changed during the five years of the program, and I find this understandable given the instability of the school population.

Because parents and educators have connected through pleasant social interchanges, the principal says that there are few parents who take offense when children need to be disciplined. For example, she assumed and received parent support when she and the guidance counselor went to homes to retrieve children who were absent from school without cause. She explained that when a child was absent from school, it was often difficult to verify the reason, since telephones were often disconnected and parents were usually at work. So she and the guidance counselor walk the neighborhood and go to the children's homes. "The children (playing hooky at home) always open the door," Robinson said, "and we tell them that it's important to us that they come to school, and we make them come back, even if there's only five minutes left in the school day." Parents support her efforts, and according to Dr. Robinson, appreciate her commitment to their children's education.

Scores from the California Achievement Test were posted in the teachers' room, revealing scores in reading, language, math, and the total battery at around the 50th percentile. Third grade scores had gone up from the previous year, while fifth grade scores had declined.

At the William Beane school, we observed a SPMT meeting. The principal was very open to input from the group, but agenda items were presented in such a way that discussion was not zestful, and future action steps were often not clearly resolved. One teacher mentioned to me after the meeting that parents at this school were still not fully involved: the parents on the SPMT were the same ones that had been on it for the last four years, and teachers were still compelled to do all the work for such activities as the spaghetti supper, which was poorly attended. Our guides, Jan Stocklinski and Jean Miller Colbert, acknowledged the problems that I noted, but also indicated their optimism that they could be overcome by training, since this school was a new addition to the Comer schools.

Commentary

When identifying problems in implementing the School Development Program, Stocklinski and Miller Colbert mentioned three: the amount of careful follow-up work required to support principals in sharing power with staff and parents; the lack of inservice time for teachers to really learn and practice new skills; and the need for a change in many teachers' attitudes that would lead them to accept parents as equals. These problems were of course not unfamiliar to us at the Ellis and at P.S. 111. There is a big difference, though, in the amount of focused resources devoted to staff, parent, and administrative training in the Comer process in Prince George's County and that available in the SRO project. Stocklinski and Miller Colbert spend a lot of their time visiting sites and providing individual and group consultation to principals and SPMTs at the 16 Comer schools throughout the year. This consultation is in addition to the training provided to teams from each school who attend three-day training sessions in New Haven, the four inservice days devoted to school improvement concerns, and the two days of annual retreat offered to all members of the SPMTs. I appreciated the energy and resources devoted to training and the acceptance of the fact that transformation of skills and attitudes is a complex process that requires time and careful cultivation.

The clarity of the model's principles and structures is useful for educators and parents who are trying to implement the model. Interested participants are encouraged to observe at sites where the model is working, which generates optimism about feasibility as well as useful examples of specific skills. The number of sites implementing the model within and outside the district is also a bonus, because there is lots of opportunity for problem sharing as well as friendly competition.

The Comer model incorporates each of the components I listed on the first page of this report as essential ingredients for achieving success for all children in an urban setting. However, I think a problem with the model is that there is a lack of explicit attention to reform of curriculum and instructional strategies, which I believe may slow down the rate of students' progress in academic areas.

In our limited observations of classrooms in Prince George's County, the focus was on basal readers, workbooks, and group lecture and recitation. Manipulatives were in short supply even in the kindergarten at the William Beane School, and there was little evidence of a print-rich environment or individualized writing and reading assignments. Principal Pat Green had to go over the head of the district superintendent to implement an instructional strategy that the SPMT decided was important for improving reading skills: the model does not provide energy and example for curriculum reform. The emphasis on the whole child and

relationship-building can go a long way to making children eager to learn: what and how the child learns also needs attention. Schools where the SPMT and SSST structures are working well progress to comprehensive curriculum reform eventually, but it is not an initial focus.

I think the philosophy of parent involvement is quite complex in this model. On the one hand, connection with parents is a fundamental building block of the model, a requirement for the forging of community, of relationships, and of the continuity of learning between home and school across multiple domains: social, psychological, emotional moral, linguistic, cognitive development as well as attitudes, values, and behavior (see Comer, 1988b).

On the other hand, Comer acknowledges that many of the children in these inner city schools come from families that are poor, marginal, and afflicted by significant trauma, discontinuity, and disruption. He sees frequent examples of children whose development is lacking or at odds with the mainstream when they arrive at school, and where the discontinuity continues to increase as the children mature. Therefore, Comer emphasizes the teaching of social as well as academic skills in school, and encourages parent participation in the identification of objectives and content that would be useful in mainstream society.

But parents are not seen as equal partners in the attainment of children's success, and at least in the literature I have seen, the recognition of parents as experts in their fields or culture has not been highlighted. In Prince George's County, even in the flagship schools, I did not see much evidence of encouragement of family participation in learning activities at home (although my knowledge is admittedly limited). There were two exceptions: parents were encouraged to participate in science fair projects, and in one of the more affluent communities in the district, participation of parents in learning math content was supported. But partnership between home and school for **academic** success did not emerge as a priority. This orientation may underestimate the resources in the community and contribute to the difficulty of teachers failing to recognize parents as equals.

The Accelerated Schools Model

Background

Henry Levin at Stanford University is the primary spokesperson for the Accelerated Schools model (e.g., see Levin, 1987, 1988a, 1988b). First piloted in 1986 at two schools in the San Francisco area, the Hoover and the Webster, the Accelerated Schools program has since been initiated at 37 more schools in Missouri, Illinois, and Utah. In Illinois, there is a state-wide

newsletter, "The Illinois Network of Accelerated Schools," and Chevron is sponsoring the initiation of satellite centers in New Orleans, Houston, Los Angeles, Seattle and other sites. The development of a national newsletter, formal training program, and research program is underway, and the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation is supporting the expansion of the program from the elementary to the middle school level.

Principles

As described in the working paper, Towards Accelerated Middle Schools for At-Risk Youth (Hopfenberg, Levin, Meister, and Johnson, 1990), the focus of the program is on at-risk students, defined as "those students who lack the family, home, and community resources to succeed in school as schools are currently constituted" (p. 1). The authors identify a mismatch between individuals and institutions and seek to transform the entire school to address the needs of these children "through creative school organization, stimulating curricula, and powerful instructional techniques" (p. 2). The emphasis is on acceleration of the curriculum rather than standard remediation techniques. A common vision and unity of purpose are demanded. They seek to avoid the fragmentation that is typical of most school reforms, but rather seek a comprehensive alteration of the school culture: "Add-on programs do not affect the all-important school culture of attitudes, meanings and beliefs about schooling, such as trust and communication among staffs, reflection, and the spirit of risk-taking" (p. 13). In this model, teachers, staff, students and parents are empowered to address student needs. Building on strengths of all in the community is emphasized, as is taking responsibility for results and using regular assessments to inform decisions and keep track of progress.

The authors identify four components of reform:

1. High expectations and high status for participants;
2. A specified deadline for closing the achievement gap;
3. A curriculum that engages the interests of children and includes concepts, analysis, problem-solving, and interesting applications; and
4. Regular involvement of parents, use of community resources, and extensive participation of teachers in designing the interventions they will implement.

The authors specify complementary changes in curriculum, instruction, and organization. Changes in curriculum should include a focus on acceleration rather than remediation; content that includes oral, kinesthetic, and artistic expression as well as book learning; learning through the manipulation of materials; and an emphasis on critical thinking, problem-solving, and the

"capacity for engrossment." Instructional techniques emphasize cooperative learning and peer tutoring.

Governance or organization is broken down into three categories. There are quarterly meetings of the school as a whole, at which all major decisions must be discussed and approved. There are weekly meetings of task forces, which are small groups organized around areas of priority concern. Finally, there are bi-weekly meetings of the Steering Committee, composed of parents, teachers, teacher aides, and other staff. This group is either elected or appointed on a rotating basis, and its mission is to monitor the task forces and develop recommendations for consideration by the whole school.

These authors have also formalized a process by which community members monitor their progress and develop solutions to problems which emerge. Called the "Inquiry Process," it includes six steps:

1. Training in decision making;
2. Establishing an inquiry process (Gathering baseline data, establishing a vision of the school that will be the focus of a six year change effort);
3. Comparison of the vision with the baseline data;
4. Establishing not more than three or four initial priorities;
5. Operationalizing the task forces to refine the priorities into specific and organizing questions which can: guide the group's work, narrow the problem to specific causes, seek out alternative solutions within and outside of the school, develop a proposal, and implement and evaluate it.

Each of the guidelines for achieving success for all children mentioned on the first page of this report is addressed in the Accelerated Schools model.

Site Visit

The Hoover School has a population that is 95% Hispanic, with instruction offered primarily in Spanish through the third grade along with daily ESL lessons. The Hoover is a neighborhood school in a low-income but attractive community, with significant parent availability during the day. I spent a very long day at the Hoover School, where I met with Patty Lief, the coordinator of the Accelerated School (AS) project at Hoover; the principal, John Baker; and Maria Martinez, a parent; and visited three classrooms for about an hour each. Subsequently, I spent three hours interviewing Wendy Hopfenberg at Stanford, had a brief meeting with

Hank Levin and met with him again back in Boston.

I was very impressed with the energy, commitment, excitement, and hard work that was evident throughout the school. Parent participation in the life of the school is evident. Maria Martinez, for example, participated as a parent on the School Site Council (Steering Committee), worked as a bilingual aide in the school, and will be involved in selecting the new superintendent. She will participate in training for the selection process and has attended training sessions at Stanford on conflict resolution and other topics.

Martinez described the explosion of parent and community involvement that had been occurring. The night before, for example, over 80 couples had gotten together to raise money to improve security around the school. Maria ran out of the handicrafts she had made in 45 minutes, and within this very poor community, \$300 was raised to donate to the school. She said that before she would just drop off her children, but now parent participation is welcomed both inside and outside of the classroom. She estimated that 89% of the parents come to conferences now and said that the Open House and Family Math programs got very good turnout.

It was clear that she thought her input was really valued. When I asked her about her role on the Steering Committee, she said that the principal had insisted that parents have a say, and when she said they needed crossing guards, "I got that." She also enjoyed her role as an aide in the kindergarten because she was empowered to "teach kids and take over the class." She especially appreciated that she was assigned to the kindergarten every day, rather than allowed to "just use machines."

Patty Lief, the AS coordinator at the Hoover school, added to the list of parent involvement activities. One of the task forces (or cadres as they call them at Hoover) is focused on parent involvement. In addition to the Family Math program, which involved parents, teachers, and children for six weeks in enjoyable math activities that could be extended at home, the school initiated an extended day program (at 25c per hour per family), and a counseling program in the evenings for families at risk. A parent-teacher group meets once a month to respond to parents' ideas and concerns. Lief was particularly pleased that the efforts of the cadre had encouraged the involvement of many parents who had not traditionally connected with the school.

Lief expanded on the use of the inquiry model as a focus for the activities of the parent involvement cadre. She said that the cadre was indeed formulating specific questions about family involvement that led to data collection by each teacher, which in turn affected the programs that were planned. Nonetheless, she felt that the inquiry process was difficult to fit into the culture

of the school because it required lots of time: formulating questions, gathering data, performing the data analysis, and then developing recommendations. She felt that the process was important, but that the negative side was losing momentum and the need to draw on skills (such as data analysis) that were not necessarily part of teachers' backgrounds.

Lief was very excited about the evidence of teacher empowerment that she was seeing, and the power of the model to unleash incredible skills, strengths, organization, and creativity. She mentioned how the teachers single-handedly set up the extended day program by reaching into the community for resources, and how they used their understanding of the children to enrich the new instructional programs they were using: Project READ and Finding Out-Descubriemento (F.O.D.).

My classroom observations confirmed her excitement. For example, in a third grade class, students were working on map skills through the F.O.D. program. Children had developed a neighborhood map that included the school, their streets and houses; had constructed papier-mache houses to place on a map, and were exploring latitude/longitude coordinates on oranges and globes. Part of their reading program included stories about grandmothers, reflecting attitudes and experiences of older family members in three cultures (e.g., "Annie and the Old One"). The children had constructed dioramas representing the different settings in the stories, and were doing a project on what they remembered about their own grandmothers or grandfathers (a project which integrated writing skills and artistic activity). A small group discussion of a short story about a Japanese emperor emphasized critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and children subsequently worked on writing haiku in English. I was impressed with the teacher's ability to appeal to many learning styles; the integration of each of these lessons with the children's own experiences; the appreciation of the contributions of many different cultures, and the high standards of performance that were expected and supported.

Principal John Baker confirmed the dedication to high levels of parent involvement that others had mentioned in describing his role. He explained how he organized a huge meeting of parents to tell them his expectations. "To help us help your child," he asked each parent to sign a pledge agreeing to attend Back-to-School-Night and parent-teacher conferences, get their children to school on time, and spend 15 minutes of quality time with their child(ren) each day. In return, he pledged to be always available to hear concerns and offered many opportunities for involvement. In fact, he told me that his most important future goal was to have "full-blown" parent involvement, where involvement could be seen in a multitude of ways inside and outside of the school. He wanted every parent to feel that he or she could fit in, no matter what, and was most eager to connect with parents of low-achieving

children.

When I asked him what he was most proud of that was going on in the school, he said he was proudest of his staff, whom he described as "wonderful, exciting, and self-directed." He continued that they enjoyed teaching and worked well with people." It was clear that he believed in the notion of principal as facilitator, and described several actions he had taken to support parents and staff in expressing their views and contributing to decision-making. He said that he really enjoyed the shared responsibility of this model, but found the need to monitor the many meetings and task forces quite demanding. When I asked him how he could manage as a first year principal, he said that he had become a workaholic. Interestingly, Wendy Hopfenberg reported that the superintendent had told her that Baker ran the best school site committee meeting that he had seen. Baker emphasized the need for intensive training to prepare principals, staff, and parents for the Accelerated Schools model.

Results

The AS model has not yet recorded significant positive gains in national achievement tests. According to Lief, scores rose from the 20th percentile to the 30th last year, but that this limited level of success was somewhat demoralizing for the staff. John Baker noted that the tests seemed particularly difficult for children for whom English was a second language, as the focus seemed to be more on fooling the children (e.g., reversed letters, or the difference between further and farther) than on measuring what they really knew. Both Lief and Baker mentioned their disappointment at these 1989-90 results. Baker planned to use the first meeting of the School Site Council next year to initiate an item analysis of those questions where the children had difficulty and to plan accordingly. Levin has encouraged the Educational Testing Service to review the adequacy of its assessment tools for these populations. (On a more encouraging note, of the 20 or 30 children who participated in Family Math, all but one of those who were tested that year (eight children) did well, with one reaching the ninth grade level.)

My observation of the children in three classes revealed children who were deeply engaged, eager to participate, and well-disciplined. Vicky Gonzales, the first grade teacher with whom I spoke, said that all but three of her children were already writing (this was in March). I noted prolific work (pages of spontaneous work from individuals and big stacks of papers to return), carefully crafted sentences, appropriate punctuation. She said that she had never had so many writing so early, and she attributed these gains in part to Project READ, the new curriculum approach selected by a cadre. In a fourth grade class, children received individual support and encouragement, very clear expectations about completing homework, and opportunities to engage in critical

thinking about the stories they read.

I have limited information about the Webster school, the other AS school in the San Francisco area. Richard Sussman (another IRE researcher) reported a conversation with the principal on November 3rd, in which she said: "Our scores were just released and we went from the 4th to the 27th percentile in reading, math, and written." Although this consistency seems uncharacteristic, the size of the increase is important, as well as the distressingly low starting point.

Commentary

The organizational elements of the model (School Site Council, cadres) appeared to be working extremely well at the Hoover School, bolstered by the principal's belief in the model and excellent leadership, and the ongoing guidance for the effort provided by Stanford. During 1987-88, very sophisticated graduate students (principals themselves) facilitated the cadres, bringing enormous skills and access to wide resources. Teachers have incorporated the process components of the F.O.D. approach into the cadres, so that they work with a facilitator, closure person, recorder, and resource gatherer. Patty Lief reports that there is always a rich exchange of views in the cadre meetings and that the staff are committed to collegial work to accomplish school improvement goals. A challenge this year has been learning to get along without their expert facilitators from Stanford and making adaptations to the model that reflect the realities of their community.

The Accelerated Schools model is quite dependent on extensive training for participants and continued access to the resources of a college or university for support in data analysis and identification of possible curriculum resources and instructional approaches that would meet the objectives of the cadres. It is interesting that the aspect of the model that seems to fit least well into the direct-service, practical world of the schools is the inquiry approach. Wendy Hopfenberg reported that the tendency is to brainstorm solutions before determining the causes of the problem, and to select a solution based on an attractive presentation rather than specific needs. The emphasis on systematic problem analysis and solution generation is more familiar in the university setting, and it is time-consuming and difficult to apply in a few hours after school. Patty Lief, John Baker, and Wendy Hopfenberg all mentioned that the staff was concerned about the "rigid" application of the inquiry model in the school.

Another important ingredient of this model is the voluntary commitment of school personnel to the model (75% commitment of the staff is minimum). The emphasis on unity of purpose and community is critical in avoiding fragmentation of staff, and was a step that was not taken at P.S. 111 and the Ellis. School-wide inservice to

develop a common mission at the outset of the commitment also forges community and provides clear direction for future work.

One of the powerful attractions of both the Comer model and Accelerated Schools models is that they offer a different vision of the values and principles that guide the way business is transacted in the schools. Comer emphasizes the power of relationships as the transforming organizing principle of his model. He says, "Nothing is more important to success in schools than the quality of relationships between and among students, teachers, and parents." (1988c, p. 34). An emphasis on the affective domain, a developmental approach, a no-fault orientation, a holistic view of children and education help translate the emphasis on relationships into specific practices.

The AS model is even more explicit in suggesting how to transform the culture of the school. They advocate eight values (equity, participation, communication/community, reflection, experimentation, trust, and risk-taking) and three principles (unity of purpose, empowerment, and building on strengths) to help shape a new vision of education and community (Hopfenberg et al., 1990).

For most teachers, these values and principles are very compelling. The opportunity to recognize the importance of relationships in the craft of teaching and to enter into dialogue with others about the goals and practice of teaching is energizing and empowering. Noddings (1988) emphasizes the importance of caring as a model for education, and its transformational implications are captured in this excerpt:

If we were to explore seriously the ideas suggested by an ethic of caring for education, we might suggest changes in almost every aspect of schooling: the current hierarchical structure of management, the rigid mode of allocating time, the kind of relationships encouraged, the size of schools and classes, the goals of instruction, modes of evaluation, patterns of interaction, selection of content.

Teasing out the intricate connections among values, curriculum, management, and instructional practices is a necessity in transformational school reform. My guess is that none of these connections can be left to chance, but that not all of these challenges can be taken on simultaneously. The new learning that is required encompasses group dynamics, the change process, problem-solving, curriculum and instructional practices, and much more. The need for training -- and the extent of that training -- is obvious.

Hopfenberg and I talked about the importance of the principal in implementing the AS model. It was her conviction that the model could not be implemented unless the principal was either initially responsive or "willing to let go and share" with the school community after training. Stanford has had difficulty in implementing the AS model at the Webster school in San Francisco, in part because the principal was unhappy with the teachers (and encouraged an 80% staff turnover), and in part because she felt the AS structure was not totally appropriate for her school. Certainly Carlos Gibb at the Ellis had the same concerns about staff and SRO involvement, and implementation of the structures and processes suggested by SRO did not occur at a school-wide level.

In both programs, I see an absence of explicit focus on multiculturalism or on the recognition and appreciation of differences. My sense is that the understanding of different cultures and their values about learning and caring are critical to the relationships of teachers, staff, parents, and children and to the development of appropriate curriculum and instructional practices. I think it is important that an emphasis on "unity of purpose" not mask important differences that need to be wrestled with, and that the seeking of strengths within different cultures is an important avenue for children's learning and parent partnership. I think it is possible that a multicultural focus has not been emphasized in the Comer or AS programs because the pilot schools' student populations are quite homogeneous: 90-99% black in New Haven and Prince George's County; 95% Hispanic at the Hoover school. Many of our cities now house very heterogeneous populations, and a comprehensive model of school success needs to address this fact.

The San Diego Parent Involvement Model

Background

The San Diego City Schools serve over 500,000 children from a broad range of racial, ethnic, and language backgrounds. To encourage a more active partnership with parents so as to assure the success of all children, the superintendent has initiated the development of a comprehensive parent involvement policy and implementation plan under the jurisdiction of the Community Relations and Integration Services Division. This initiative includes input by a large (45 member) Parent Involvement Task Force composed of parents, teachers, administrators, and community representatives; a parent involvement policy (crafted by the Task Force and approved by the School Committee); a three-year plan for the implementation of the parent involvement policy; and a budget of \$100,000 to support the initiation of parent involvement programs in the district.

The three-year plan includes:

1. Coordination: Providing information and resources and improving cross-cultural communication to enable schools to involve parents as partners (Year 1);
2. Cooperation: Linking schools with district and community resources to match site needs and benefit students (Year 2);
3. Collaboration: Building a sense of common purpose and shared goals among parents, schools, and community; integrating efforts and services to maximize benefits to students (Year 3).

An important part of the initiative is capacity building and preparation for school staff. To this end, the Community Relations and Integration Services Division has identified 12 projects from applications submitted by 60 schools. Support provided by the Division includes working with principals, teachers, and staff to improve communication with parents and enhance educators' awareness of the value of parent involvement; planning and presenting needed inservice; and providing technical assistance in assessing the effectiveness of the programs and reporting results.

Additional resources are provided at the district level for all schools. For example, a staff newsletter includes practical ideas and strategies for working with parents, a calendar of events, and ways to use cultural diversity as a resource for student learning. Research articles for staff and a variety of resource materials that schools may wish to order for use with parents are provided. A handbook for principals includes the policy statement and implementation guidelines for capacity building, partnership development, follow-up and support. A county-wide resource bank of presenters, community groups, and organizations available to assist schools is being developed. There is enormous expertise within the division on parent involvement, and the staff provides consultation, workshops, and liaisons with other agencies and groups as needed. A yearly conference will be offered to staff and parents to inform, motivate participation, and encourage partnerships. Extensive attention is given to follow-up and support activities as well as capacity building and preparation for school staff.

Site Visit

A team of IRE researchers (Sussman, Swap, Zeldin) visited San Diego and spent one to two days with Jeana Preston, Janet Chrispeels, and Bea Fernandez learning about the goals of the Community Relations and Integrated Services Division, meeting with representatives of the Parent Involvement Task Force, and visiting three schools, each of which had received a Parent Involvement Incentive grant.

Oak Park. Oak Park was using its grant to train a team of parents and teachers in active listening and to invite culture-like groups (Latino, African-American, Vietnamese and Caucasian) to come to the school to identify their needs and concerns. The planning group felt that this approach acknowledged the diversity in the school and provided a beginning for helping each group to voice its particular concerns and find its place and power. A needs assessment defined common concerns as well as individual and group needs. Follow-up ideas included the initiation of a Parent Center, changing the nature of the Fall Open House, using the School Site Council to plan additional programs, and implementing Project Code, a drug prevention program, using the trained facilitators to do additional outreach to families.

At this point, there were only a small number of teachers involved in the project and partnership around children's learning had not yet been considered. Yet the effort seemed a starting point in building parent and staff awareness both about the usefulness of parent involvement and the diversity of expectations that parents had about the school and their children.

Correia Junior High. The Correia Junior High was using the funds of the Incentive Grant to present a spring conference for over 700 people. The keynote speaker was Anne Henderson, and other luminaries such as Reginald Clark, Jeanne Mendoza, and David Crippens were scheduled to speak or hold workshops.

The assistant principal, Arlene LaPlante, was dedicated to involvement of all the school's parents, and the school had already implemented several innovative strategies to do so. For example, the school was a Spanish-English bilingual magnet school, with 375 children bused voluntarily each day. There is a long waiting list to enter the school, and a rich multicultural curriculum is part of the school's attractiveness. PTA meetings are held at the school and the following week in the barrios, completely in Spanish, with child care provided.

The conference as an event was probably not as important as the parent involvement that supported its planning. LaPlante explained that she telephoned parents representing "all flavors" to ask for their help. Over 40 parents became part of the planning committee, and team-building and trust-building were an explicit part of the mission. LaPlante is hoping that this group will become the core of a six-year problem-solving group, whose long-term goal will be to guarantee the academic success of every child in the group.

LaPlante was very clear about how much the parents could learn from each other. She said, "The white parents know how to work the system, but don't have the concept of cooperative learning and the importance of elders in the extended family." She described how a black woman, not well-dressed and heavy, was silent at first, but

was now the head of the food committee. She said: "Now she speaks up and has earned respect."

The project has not yet had a school-wide impact, except that parents on the committee are much more connected with the school and their children's teachers. The assistant principal's goal is to extend partnership throughout the school, a goal that she will "never stop trying" to achieve.

Torrey Pines Elementary School. At this school, located in the affluent town of La Jolla, 33% of the children are bused from other neighborhoods. Thirty-one different languages are spoken by children in the school, and 49% speak a language other than English as their primary language.

The first goal mentioned in principal Dennis Doyle's grant application to the district office was to offer a series of brainstorming meetings to encourage parents from the Voluntary Ethnic Enrollment Program (VEEP) to identify what they needed in order to become more fully integrated into the educational processes in the school. Based on the assessment of parents' interests and needs, the parent education programs that were offered included a bilingual education program, a workshop on conferencing with teachers, a session on how to read your child's report card, Family Math, and Family Health. Principal Doyle is cultivating a core group of trained VEEP parents who might be willing to help with the implementation of further parent activities and is planning to identify key staff and key parents who will provide continuity of leadership in the parent involvement program next year.

Another focus of the grant was the development of recyclable hands-on learning activity centers related to school-wide teaching/learning themes that could be exported to appropriate classrooms to support the curriculum. As this project evolved, two parents with sophisticated science backgrounds offered to develop an integrated, hands-on learning center approach based on a model they had seen at a private children's school. Parents and teachers went to visit the school, and putting the project together involved consulting experts and attending demonstrations and seminars on learning styles, activity learning centers, and conferencing with parents. Several themes were selected for the activity centers, including space exploration, animals, and natural history.

Initially the learning center activities were set up in the library, but after a few months, at the request of the principal, parents and curriculum were taken into the classrooms. The centers were staffed by parents and grandparents, who developed the materials and brought them to each primary classroom for approximately an hour per week. Parents coordinated the construction, staffing, and content of the activities, but most teachers eventually became involved in previewing resource books

and making suggestions. When we observed learning center activities in a second grade class, we noted seven learning stations. They featured an array of living reptiles; taped stories and information about them; and creative games, language activities, and problem-solving activities that encouraged individual engagement. Children were excited but focused, and the parents and grandparents of the children directing the activities seemed to be enjoying themselves. The teacher observed and offered occasional support.

Extensive efforts were made to involve VEEP parents in meetings and workshops, including holding meetings in these parents' neighborhoods, direct mailings, telephoning all parents to announce upcoming events (done by two staff members and four bilingual aides), and hiring a bilingual aide to make telephone calls in the evenings. Parents were encouraged to speak with the principal at any time, and his ability to speak Spanish encouraged contact.

Commentary

The genius of Dennis Doyle and Arlene LaPlante at identifying a goal and working systematically and delicately toward it was dazzling. I noted their skill in recognizing strengths, even in unconventional packages; in giving people breathing room, yet encouraging experimentation; in knowing how to move in small but steady steps toward an evolving goal that included much collaboration; in exuding confidence and optimism and celebrating achievements. Both have very complex tasks to achieve: teacher support of parent involvement is not yet strong, and both parent bodies encompasses an extremely wide range of class, ethnic, racial, and language backgrounds. The support of central administration is very useful to these administrators in moving towards their goals.

The support of central administration in San Diego for parent involvement efforts is ground-breaking, strong, comprehensive, and focused, yet no consistent direction has evolved from the 16 schools who received incentive grants. In the three schools that we visited, teacher involvement in the programs was quite tentative or limited to a few teachers. None of the 60 applications concentrated on developing support for learning at home, a critical element in an effort to achieve success for all children. When questions about direction were raised, Jeana Preston responded that her job "was not to limit programs, but to shape and guide them through questions," and that "in the first year of any program, the goal is to get the whole herd going mostly West." When asked, "How do you know if they're heading West?", she responded: "I don't know yet. We will evaluate the program this summer." Her main concern was to requisition the resources needed to provide the range of services promised and to avoid the erosion of commitment that so

often afflicts educational innovations.

I would hypothesize, based on the extensive literature on the connection between parent involvement and school achievement, that the parent involvement emphasis in San Diego will increase student achievement somewhat, but will not be sufficient to cause achievement breakthroughs for at-risk students. For such results to occur, an explicit link between parent involvement and school success seems critical, and parent involvement must be seen not as an experimental add-on, but part of a fundamental transformation of the culture of the school.

Janet Chrispeels, another of the very talented members of the Division's team, identified what she felt were the most important forms of parent involvement. She targeted these three areas for improvement: teachers' communication and conferencing skills, parents' understanding and monitoring of homework through feedback from and to the teacher, and students' learning at home. If the team is able to encourage such programs in the schools, and if they continue to build capacity in the district, I expect they will see additional exciting results that are closely linked to student achievement.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSIONS

Our experiences at the Ellis and P.S. 111 and comparisons with other schools selected for their promising practices have led me to several conclusions about parent involvement, success for all children, and the process of reform. This chapter will summarize conclusions that have emerged in other chapters and present some additional reflections.

On Parent Involvement

Reaching Parents

It is possible to initiate parent involvement programs relatively quickly and effectively, given good leadership of the programs and at least a minimum level of parent and teacher support. Parents at the Ellis, P.S. 111, the Comer schools, the AS schools, and the three schools we visited in San Diego responded eagerly and in large numbers to parent involvement efforts that were carefully based on their interests, well run, and responsive to their concerns.

At the Ellis and the three schools in San Diego, it turned out that even "hard to reach" parents were not so hard to reach when they were offered programs (such as the Family Support program at the Ellis) that were respectful of their strengths and backgrounds and scheduled at times and places that parents could manage.

This is an important and optimistic learning from this project. Good parent involvement and outreach programs were developed within a two-year time frame, and parents took advantage of and appreciated the efforts made in these two schools to welcome them, respond to their needs, and include them in their children's education.

Selecting Activities

There seems to be no magic formula about what programs work best to promote parental involvement and student success. A range of different programs targeted for diverse audiences and adapted to the needs and resources of the school and community seem to work best. However, some promising practices that were developed at the Ellis and at P.S. 111 deserve replication, such as the Parent Center, the ESL program, Parent Outreach workers, access for teachers to a telephone, Open House Week, the mini-grant program that highlighted parental involvement in curriculum, and the Raise

a Reader program (See Chapters Two and Four for elaboration). Hopefully, additional programs that were particularly developed for these schools, such as the multicultural celebration at P.S. 111 and the International Night at the Ellis will become part of important new traditions at these schools.

It seems clear that when there has not been a history of parent involvement in a school (or involvement among all subgroups of parents), school or classroom-based activities that promote pleasant social encounters and exchange of information among adults are indispensable. These activities, usually supplemented by food and informal conversation, provide a mechanism for parents and teachers to develop an acquaintance as "just people," creating a context for an array of additional activities or joint projects. It seems that these types of activities signal a mutual interest in building adult relationships on behalf of the child and in breaking down the barriers between home and school that seem inevitable in urban communities. Social events continue to be needed over time, to draw in new parents and educators and to help all adult members of the community to appreciate the rituals that are valued among the adults.

As we saw in Chapter Two, expansion of the parent involvement program beyond social and informational exchanges is ideally based on two principles. The first principle is to discover from parents themselves the kinds of programs they need or are interested in. Thus, parents should be asked to voice their concerns and interests; programs should be based on those interests (hopefully with some parent leadership in program development); and programs that are offered should incorporate parent evaluation and feedback into subsequent planning.

The second principle upon which to plan a parent involvement program is to link parent programs to the mission of the school. In the programs we were exploring, success for all children was a unifying mission. This means that parent programs (as well as other programs) must focus on supporting children's academic and social success through such mechanisms as parent volunteers, learning programs at home, or improved communication around homework and curricular expectations. At P.S. 111, parents were linked to the work of the school through the Language Initiative, and mini-grants, school volunteers, newsletters, parent meetings and workshops, materials sent home, the Read-Aloud program all extended and supported that initiative. Parents seemed to appreciate the clarity from the school about what they could do to support their children's learning, and the programs and activities were also rewarding in themselves.

Because parents and educators are busy, these two winnowing principles are essential to avoid initial or eventual fragmentation, low attendance, and low enthusiasm on the part of teachers and parents. Moreover, the partnership and joint

ownership that are involved in developing activities that are appropriate to the shared mission tend to release new energy and expand commitment. I think that this is because parents and educators recognize that programs are not simply serving their personal needs, but that they are also contributing to their children's growth and to the improvement of the school as a whole.

In Chapter Two, I presented a developmental model for parent involvement programs and a sequential model for providing leadership for these programs. It is useful, I think, to see the continuities in experience in successful sites, and to take advantage of this knowledge in planning or expanding new programs.

The Need for Training

At least two aspects of a parent outreach program have the potential to bring parents and educators into intense contact and require training to transform intense contact into partnership. These two areas are improving the skills of parents and teachers in communicating with each other around difficult situations (as in crisis conferences) and involving parents and teachers in school-based planning and management groups. Both arenas concentrate difficulties that all of us have in dealing with conflict, in making good decisions, in setting priorities, in communicating clearly and honestly; both arenas tend to highlight differences in background, culture, class, and values that make these communication and problem-solving dilemmas even more complex; both arenas require new skills in sharing power. Because both require joint work, new attitudes, and improved skills, it is important that the resources of time, appropriate organizational structures, and training be marshalled in support of that work.

The Comer model, the AS model, and the San Diego City Schools all invest heavily in initial and follow-up training to support home-school partnership skills, particularly in these two areas. IRE was not clear or consistent about the types of training that needed to be provided on home-school partnership. Workshops on conferencing skills were not offered at either site. IRE did provide support to staff and parents at P.S. 111 by hiring Barbara Jackson to work with the principal and to plan agendas for the School Community Planning Council. Subsequently, facilitators were brought in at Jackson's request to lead subgroups and guide the discussion during the retreats. Although useful activities were offered to Ellis staff that promoted discussion of models of parent involvement, no consistent support was available during Year Two to build staff skills in group (teacher/administrator or parent/educator) problem-solving, communication, or decision making. The Planning Council at P.S. 111 made important progress in group decision-making; the Ellis council did not.

Data from all of these sites and the value of hindsight lead me to the conclusion that training for both parents and educators

in these areas of potentially intense contact is critical. An expectation that training is necessary and normative would dignify and clarify the joint work. In the context of training, difficult issues could be broached that were delicately avoided at the pilot schools (though definitely recognized and discussed in small parent or faculty groups). Moreover, training could help groups to develop some trust and prevent them from falling into avoidable traps. Ideally, training would include opportunities for staff and parents to observe models, discuss them, practice new skills, and obtain some ongoing feedback and coaching from consultant(s).

The Need for a Multicultural Focus

An interesting learning from San Diego was that it is very useful for the principal (or other educator with authority) to explain to parents what the school expects from them. Information about what the school expects is not obvious to parents in many communities today. Parents from some cultures feel it is disrespectful to educators for them to come to school; some parents feel uncomfortable if a teacher does not touch their child in affection or to discipline him, as the situation warrants. Because of the range of value systems influencing children's behaviors, clarity from the school about what parents and children are expected to do, together with genuine interest in parents' involvement, may be reassuring and mobilizing.

The work being done in the San Diego schools also reflected an intense interest in discovering parents' expectations and hopes, and drawing on parents' strengths to improve the school. When two teacher facilitators and a translator spoke with a group of Vietnamese parents at the Oak Park School, for example, the parents revealed not only their concerns about their children's fluency in English, but also their discomfort at children throwing away their food at lunch. This initial meeting has encouraged further contact of the parents with the school: "as if a door has opened."

I recommend that schools work toward a philosophy of interactive learning or partnership to guide their parent involvement programs (explained further in Chapter Two). As Seeley (1989) points out, the enormity of the task of achieving success for all children requires utilization of all the strengths and resources the school can assemble. Moreover, the multicultural complexity of the populations of many of our schools presents a new and unavoidable professional challenge to educators. We must seek to understand the backgrounds of the children in our classrooms, both to increase the connections between children's learning at home and in school, and to enrich and improve the school's curriculum.

At both the Ellis and P.S. 111, an interest in multicultural curriculum provided one focal point for parent/educator activities, yet this area has not yet received the intense inquiry and follow-

through that it requires. At the Hoover school in Redwood City, concerted efforts to transform the curriculum to reflect a bilingual and multicultural approach through the "inquiry process" were underway, bolstered by the work of the cadres and access to resources from Stanford. This level of exploration and curriculum revision is what is needed to meet the educational challenge of teaching all of our nation's children.

The School as Resource Broker for Families

The parent programs at the Ellis and to a lesser degree at P.S. 111 offered direct services and coordination of services to parents who requested help with immediate needs, such as housing, food, counseling, or English as a Second Language. Several factors supported this direction: the very name and emphasis of the project, "Schools Reaching Out;" the recognition of the importance of including parents who were not involved at school; and the selection of staff with these interests to run the program. This level of outreach to parents was not characteristic of the other sites I visited.

There was no question that these services were needed, and that the complex bureaucracies of urban social services made negotiation and coordination of the system almost impossible for many parents in crisis, particularly those with limited English skills. Anecdotal evidence suggested that when representatives of the school offered information, services, and advocacy to parents, parents' trust in the school increased, and in many cases, the parents' availability to support their children's learning also increased. The use of neighborhood parents to staff these programs modeled important strengths and helped to normalize difficulties. Offering these services was relatively inexpensive. Schorr's book, Within our Reach (1988), underscores the importance of developing coordinated, human-scale, neighborhood services to address the crises of families in our large cities. The model that was initiated at the Ellis was a very fine one that should be continued, expanded, and replicated.

Leadership of the Parent Partnership Effort

As we saw in Chapter Four, the stability of the parent involvement program is at risk at Ellis, despite the quality and value of the programs. Lack of active administrative support and failure to make the staff or programs essential to the school's mission seem to be the primary reasons.

In contrast, at P.S. 111, the Parent Center and parent leaders have the vigorous support of the central administration and principals. The parent leaders have supported the Language Initiative and are important members of the Council. Thus, these parents are well connected to the school's mission. Nonetheless, the continuation of the parent education and outreach programs is

at risk, because they have not become part of any individual's future responsibility; they have not been adopted by the parent leaders; and they have not been incorporated into the school budget.

The key teachers in both schools initiated excellent programs. However, the key teacher role did not emerge as an effective structure for providing ongoing leadership of the parent involvement program after IRE support was withdrawn. Paying for the release of a full-time, experienced teacher is not an expense or a direction that central administration appears to be willing to sustain. In both schools, the key teachers experienced intense conflicts between the expectations of IRE and school personnel, and in both schools, the key teacher did not actively use her role to connect the parent activities to classrooms or to involve more teachers in the effort. The role appears to be isolating to the teacher who occupies it, and without the support of the principal or an advisory board, carries little power. The key teacher never felt at liberty, for example, to suggest inservice opportunities for teachers in the area of enhancing parent partnership. The key teacher role was eliminated at the Ellis after the first year and replaced by a parent who coordinated parent activities. The parent occupying this role suffered from the same problems of isolation as the teacher, but was even more disconnected from the work of teachers in classrooms and planned particular activities only at IRE's suggestion. The parent coordinator role was also not refunded by the Ellis.

Perhaps the most appealing permanent structure for coordinating parent involvement programs emerged at the Hoover School. There, "family involvement" is the title of one of three cadres of the central steering committee (which itself includes eight parents and eight teachers as well as the principal). The work of this cadre is central to the mission of the school and tied to the work of other cadres who are pursuing other components of the mission (the math cadre, for example, has offered programs which involve parents). The membership of the family involvement cadre may vary, but includes about seven teachers and parents who explore needs, analyze causes, and plan activities accordingly. Membership on the committee may change from year to year, but as the principal said, "The Parent Involvement cadre will become a permanent structure and part of the School Improvement Plan." In this case, the structure itself supports wide-based joint ownership of parent involvement activities, ties the activities into the mission of the school, and compels administrative support. Such a structure could be incorporated into the work of the P.S. 111 council, for example, to carry on the parent involvement program.

Success for All Children

The Need for an Explicit Mission

The literature on parent involvement and our experience in the pilot schools suggest that even excellent parent involvement programs are not sufficient to raise achievement scores to the national average with children at risk. For this to occur, parent involvement and school improvement efforts need to be tied to an explicit mission that champions particular goals related to success for all children, such as sixth grade achievement scores by the end of sixth grade.

In the Comer and AS models, the mission has radical, spiritual, value-laden components. Schools who voluntarily accept these models pledge a willingness to experiment to bring about a transformation in schools as they are to create a workplace that better serves teacher, student, community, and administrative needs.

There is little question that a mission of changing the culture of these two schools in two years was overly ambitious (though nonetheless worth trying). Joyce, Bennett, and Rolheiser-Bennett (1990) summarize the research on transforming the work environment of the school.

Reorienting school cultures toward collegial problem solving and study and incorporation of advances in research on curriculum and teaching has turned out to be difficult. The reason has not been an absence of models...

The problem is less one of conception than implementation. The culture of the school has proved to be a very tough customer indeed. Proposals both for the "empowerment" of teachers and for an increase in the use of the knowledge base in education depend on the realization of a radically revised workplace with very different relationships among teachers and much greater attention to the application of professional knowledge than is the norm in education settings today....The provision of substantial resources succeeds in affecting the orientation toward change only where extraordinary leadership is present....

The organization development specialists have come to believe that cosmetic or minor organizational changes will have little effect. Those who would address the problem will have to involve themselves in the reorientation of deeply entrenched

patterns...Gardner (1978) and others see the problem as one of generating a moral force that gives the improvement of social conditions priority. Baldrige (1983) also stresses the importance of values as the core of the "culture" of the organization and the creation of a forceful ethos that increases the energy of the organization and individuals who work in it (pp.33-34).

As we saw in Chapters Three and Five, SRO's efforts to proclaim the mission of success for all children or to encourage staff to adopt one were not vigorous or consistent enough to create clarity. Moreover, there was still no unanimity among school personnel even at the end of the project in their commitment to success for all children or even the value of parent partnership in improving children's achievement. Up-front clarity about goals seems to be one of the most attractive features of the Comer and AS models. Though specific mission statements vary from school to school, they have in common high expectations for children's success, objectively defined goals, and the requirement of parent involvement to achieve them. Perhaps most importantly, behind the mission statement is a moral and professional commitment to try to change the culture of the school.

The other side of this coin is to ask whether P.S. 111 or the Ellis would have signed on for the project if the commitment of, say, 75% of the staff and parents to the mission of success for all children was a prerequisite, and if certain expectations about training, parent partnership, and new organization and instructional practices were made clear. I think they would not have agreed. Viewed from this perspective, the current readiness of many school personnel in these two schools to contemplate significant reform is encouraging.

IRE's deliberate selection of sites that were not in a high state of readiness for change suggests the need for an alternate site selection process or commitment to a longer time line for reform (e.g., five years). Fullan's (1990) assessment of the process of successful reform in other sites is comforting in this regard:

Huberman and Miles, along with others, also contributed new insights into the process of teacher learning, which included the universal presence of early implementation problems in all cases of success, the role of pressure and support, the way in which change in practice frequently preceded change in beliefs and understanding, and the time-line of two or more years of active assistance during implementation (p. 5).

The Need to Specify Structures to Support the Mission

Another attractive feature of the AS and Comer models is their clarity about the need for new organizational structures that will symbolize the change in direction and provide leadership in achieving the mission. As we have seen, Comer's SPMT and SSST and the AS model's cadres and steering council provide interested schools with new organizational structures that have been connected with success in other sites. At least in the first year, IRE waited for each school to develop its own approach to reaching goals, and as we have seen, school personnel found this ambiguity confusing and suspicious.

In retrospect, it seems that it would have been possible to identify the need for a school mission without insisting on its components; it would have been possible to insist on a steering committee in the first year without specifying its priorities. This level of direction would have been appreciated I think, and prevented some negative feelings on both sides that accompanied a year of floundering.

The Need for Changes in Curricula and Instructional Practice

My analysis of the literature and our exemplary sites suggest that a necessary key to achieving the mission of success for all children is to revise curriculum and instructional practices. At P.S. 111, SRO was fortunate that the school-wide Language Initiative became tied to the projects' efforts (see Chapter Three). I would guess that the relationship between improved achievement scores in reading and writing and the Language Initiative was not accidental, but connected to the intensive and comprehensive revision of the curriculum that the principal required of all faculty as well as the support for the effort that was asked for from parents. At the Ellis, by the end of the first year, faculty had decided to zero in on curricular changes in the areas of multicultural education and whole language approaches, but no systematic, school-wide reform was undertaken, and children's test scores actually declined.

In his classic case study of the failure of open education in the Lincoln-Attucks program, Ronald Barth (1972) isolated the failure of planners to identify "means" as a significant error. He explains:

No one mentioned **means**, the operational specifications to be employed in achieving the goals. There was no administrative model or pedagogical theory, no talk of team teaching, nongrading, open education, programmed instruction, or new curricula because...it was felt that it would take about a year of observation and appraisal before a clear-cut

indication of program directions would be apparent.....The absence of any pedagogical plan led to crippling problems (pp. 117-118).

If the goal is success for all children, then educational practice must be examined. Just as "success for all children" requires an attitudinal transformation that all children can be successful, so too does it require a transformation of practice. This includes shifting the focus from children's failure to the practices we have inadvertently developed in schools that perpetuate high rates of failure and exploring alternate strategies that lead to high rates of success.

I think the "no fault" approach that Comer specifies, and the values of risk-taking, trust, communication, reflection, and experimentation that the AS model emphasizes are crucial to curricular reform. Teachers should feel encouraged to explore what "might be" in order to reach an exciting goal, rather than feel that a change in their current practice is an admission of their inadequacy. The careful efforts of the IRE staff to empower teachers to find their own voices on the research team and to become problem-solvers in areas related to classroom practice in the mini-grant programs were important steps in this direction. As yet, however, this conception of teachers as empowered or as problem-solvers is not consistently supported in either school. The supervision and evaluation models used in both schools are based on the traditional hierarchical value system, where evaluation can be used to punish noncompliance. I think there will be little progress in teacher-led curricular reform until the focus of the evaluation model becomes development rather than punishment.

Ideally, too, the selection of new or revised practices will be the result of an inquiry process that identifies problems, probes for their causes, and adopts and evaluates solutions, as in the AS model. Too often, teachers are compelled to adopt a time-consuming reform because they are told to or because it is packaged attractively. Yet it might not be the best solution or even relevant to priority problems. The School Community Planning Council at P.S. 111 initiated a problem-solving or inquiry process when they selected as a priority problem for attention the need to provide more individual attention to youngsters. Hopefully, further work of the Council will formalize this problem-solving process.

My guess is that there is an evolution in the types of problems that are addressed by a council. Barth states that: "In schools, children become priority concerns only when adult concerns have been resolved -- which unfortunately, is not very often" (1972, p. 174). For teachers (and parents) to trust the process and power of the council, it must prove that it can successfully address concerns that have to do with basic conditions in the school. At P.S. 111, teachers needed a smaller student-teacher

ratio to improve students' success, and parents needed an after-school program. At the Ellis, teachers needed a physical education program and a counseling program in order for the children to be ready to learn what they had to teach. IRE staff spoke of normalizing conditions in the school as a prelude to more intense, transforming work. This truth about a hierarchy of needs should be taken into account in recognizing how much the SRO project managed to accomplish in two short years.

The Need for Administrative Leadership and Support

The most successful administrators whom I met during the site visits had some characteristics in common. They enjoyed working with teachers and felt comfortable in a facilitating role. They were very enthusiastic about their staff, commented about areas of faculty strength, and gave staff credit for the significant gains in student success or school improvement that had occurred. They understood current realities but were also visionary, and had some ideas about how to make progress in achieving the vision. They knew how to motivate and encourage teachers and parents to work hard and take risks. Each was unambiguously committed to parent partnership and demonstrated this in their own work as well as encouraging it in others. Each was committed to a norm of continuous improvement, approaching new or continuing problems as a challenge to be overcome. Each had been blessed by the success of their efforts in at least some important areas, which contributed to their confidence in themselves and others in them. Each welcomed the use of outside resources to help them achieve their vision.

The administrators with whom we worked at the Ellis and at P.S. 111 had important strengths (not the least of which was their willingness to participate in the project), but none was initially comfortable with a collaborative model; none had demonstrated a commitment to parent partnership as an underpinning for school success; none was a visionary by preference or style; none tended to consistently support and celebrate the strengths of their faculty or families.

The principal's skill in leading the school toward success for all children is a critical component in achieving that goal. Kinzelberg took full advantage of the resources provided by IRE to his school. He accepted consultation from Barbara Jackson; he plunged into the task of running the council with vigor; he was honest in giving feedback to IRE; he gave enormous energy and thought to the Language Initiative; he reached out to parents and the community. The school has improved, and its improvement is due in significant measure to his leadership. As might be expected, there is still work to be done. He is still not comfortable with the norm of collegiality. The conflicting realities of teacher and parent empowerment versus principal accountability continue to be confusing. The skills of facilitation and sharing ownership of

success could use attention. The level of trust in the school among faculty, teachers, and administrators continues to be low. Hopefully, the resources of the project have empowered and strengthened him to continue pursuing the mission of school improvement to which he is deeply committed.

At the Ellis, Florence Hadley was supportive of the project, but she did not play a leadership role in moving it forward. This had been her style at the school, and the confusing multiplicity of programs and committees in the school during 1988-89, and her own approaching retirement probably limited any incentive she may have had to change this style. Carlos Gibb was supportive of the project in conversation with IRE staff, but he did not feel comfortable in pursuing the development of a school-wide mission and the exploration of multicultural and whole language initiatives agreed upon by parents and teachers the previous year. As a first year principal, he had other priorities. Moreover, his difficulty in demonstrating a collegial approach to leadership during a period of intensive staff evaluation, and, I think, mixed signals from his immediate supervisor about the importance of the project eroded his commitment to the project over time. The enormous change in personnel in Boston during the second year of the project (the superintendent, area superintendent, principal, assistant principal, and 40% of the faculty) could not have been anticipated, but it had a paralyzing effect on the growth and consolidation of gains and programs initiated through SRO at the Ellis.

With the clarity that hindsight brings, I believe that IRE's open-ended approach to reform would have fit better with leaders who were already inclined to be visionary and collegial. Failing that ideal match, a more prescriptive and focused approach to building the structures needed to achieve the goals of partnership and student success would probably have been comforting to the principals, given that they agreed with these goals. Failing that, a more systematic approach to offering training to the key administrators would have been valuable and perhaps led to quicker results in New York.

The Need for Training

The need for training has become a repeated theme in this report. For administrators, the most desirable components of training would have been the opportunity to visit other sites to talk with principals and observe novel organizational structures and curriculum reforms in operation; to receive skill training in group dynamics and school-based management; and to receive ongoing consultation. Despite the general validity of this recommendation for school reform projects, I do not feel that either Hadley or Gibb would have been receptive to intensive training opportunities because the timing for each was poor.

I have begun to think that some new kind of training in

addition to the usual emphasis on group dynamics and problem solving is needed for administrators who are attempting to transform their organizations. Such training would focus on an understanding of how to move a group forward in the context of the relational skills needed. The sequence would include:

1. Building group investment and excitement about the challenge.

Some of the elements would be: identification of the problem in a non-blaming way; awakening an interest in the opportunity to improve one's workplace, one's work, and oneself; using one's charisma (or that of another leader) to highlight the moral and value imperatives of the task; pointing out other reference groups who are working on this challenge and have achieved some success; demonstrating confidence in the strengths of the group; allowing the group to develop its own vision of the task ahead.

2. Building capacity in group members.

Elements would include helping the group to establish priorities from the vision and using an inquiry process to probe solutions; acquiring training for the group as needed; helping the group to identify resources (people, models that are working elsewhere, curricula) that might provide solutions; facilitating meetings, demonstrating flexibility in scheduling or other regularities of the school so that groups have time to complete their tasks; using time constraints to help the group move forward; finding the financial resources that are critical to the group's work; carving the work into doable chunks so that it approaches the vision but does not become overwhelming; providing leadership and guidance in resolving conflicts, pushing through resistances, and supporting even small amounts of progress toward the goal; querying standards and offering alternatives; offering ideas of your own as appropriate; sharing leadership as soon as possible; monitoring groups and maintaining liaisons with other groups as needed.

3. Consolidating and celebrating gains.

Leaders would need to provide support, coaching, and feedback as teachers or parents adopt new practices; bring in consultants; model risk-taking oneself; continue to offer needed resources and moral support during the difficult phases of initiating change; support the faculty's efforts and recognize their strengths; encourage dialogue about and evaluation of innovations; celebrate risk-taking; encourage teaming; draw attention of the community to successes; celebrate progress toward goals; give credit to the group for any accomplishments; find a way to acknowledge the contribution of every member of the group; renew oneself in order to tackle the next level of implementation.

To support the goals of the project, teachers needed training in skills and understanding related to parent partnership, curricula and instructional revision, and group decision making skills. Some training was provided (different at the two schools, as clarified in Chapter Three and Five), but more was needed,

particularly in the second year of the project.

Parents were offered many rich and useful educational experiences that supported them as individuals and as parents, as elaborated in Chapters Two and Four. Education about how to participate fully and effectively in the council at P.S. 111 would have been a useful addition.

Consolidation and Celebration

IRE developed several ways to celebrate, share, and consolidate the achievements of parents, faculty, and administrators at the Ellis and P.S. 111. Two videos were produced: one about the Ellis that was shown on a local television channel; another about the community portrait project at the Ellis that has just been completed. The Spring 1990 issue of Equity and Choice was devoted to articles about both schools, and multiple copies were distributed there. A national teleconference broadcast by the Learning Channel featured tapes or panel presentations by teachers, administrators, and parents from both schools. Both schools were offered opportunities to work with consultants to explore avenues for further funding. The National Commission heard final reports from both principals and the key teacher at P.S. 111, and a celebratory luncheon was held for the parent coordinator at the Ellis. Both schools are members of the League of Schools Reaching Out, providing a national network of schools interested in parent involvement and urban school improvement.

Chapters Three and Five outline program innovations that will continue. In brief, the Council, the Parent Center, and the Language Initiative will continue at P.S. 111. Support is being sought for the parent education and mini-grant programs. At the Ellis, space is being sought for the Parent Center, and funding for the coordinator and the mini-grant program seem possible. New rituals have been created at both schools; many parents and teachers have found their voices; and connections between parents and school personnel and among teachers have developed depth and strength. Both schools have acquired and developed resources within the community that extend and enrich their current offerings and create opportunities for the future.

Many innovative and important programs were initiated in this project, and much has been learned about transformation of urban schools. Many teachers, parents, and administrators have gained in skills and changed their attitudes about home-school partnership and success for all children. Some children have grown in self-esteem and academic ability because of the involvement of their parents or teachers, and these gains should be just a beginning. The staff of IRE should feel proud of what they have initiated, of their steady commitment to listening to the voices of parents and educators, and of their contribution to the empowerment of so many individuals in both systems. I have learned to deeply admire the

strengths, resilience, courage, and dedication of the parents and educators whom I have come to know in this project: their honesty, optimism, and willingness to take risks bode well for the continuing legacy of "Schools Reaching Out."

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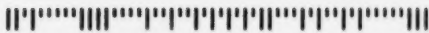
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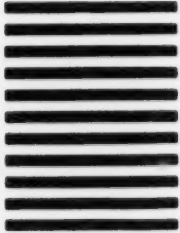


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